The Clash Within

DEMOCRACY, RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, AND INDIA'S FUTURE

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Preface

This is a book about India for an American and European audience. One of its central purposes is to bring to the attention of Americans and Europeans a complex and chilling case of religious violence that does not fit some common stereotypes about the sources of religious violence in today's world. Its second and larger aim is to use this case to study the phenomenon of religious violence and, more specifically, to challenge the popular "clash of civilizations" thesis, notably articulated by Samuel P. Huntington, according to which the world is currently polarized between a Muslim monolith, bent on violence, and the democratic cultures of Europe and North America. India, the third largest Muslim nation in the world (after Indonesia and Pakistan), is far from fitting this pattern. Instead, in the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, we find the use of European fascist ideologies by Hindu extremists to justify the murder of innocent Muslim citizens. Through a study of this case, its historical background, and the ideological debates surrounding it, I argue that the real clash is not a civilizational one between "Islam" and "the West," but instead a clash *within* virtually all modern nations—between people who are prepared to live with others who are different, on terms of equal respect, and those who seek the protection of homogeneity, achieved through the domination of a single religious and ethnic tradition. At a deeper level, the thesis of this book is the Gandhian claim that the real struggle that democracy must wage is a struggle within the individual self, between the urge to dominate and defile the other and a willingness to live respectfully on terms of compassion and equality, with all the vulnerability that such a life entails.

This book about India also suggests a way to see America—both America as it faces outward, relating to a world in which cultures are complex, not simple; and America in relation to itself. Facing outward, it is imperative to see the complexities and internal divisions that

are there, rather than to divide the world into "good" cultures and "evil" cultures. Even more important, facing inward, it is crucial to ask whether there are internal complexities, tensions, and oppositions in America that resemble those that we can more easily see in India (given that it is always easier to see problems elsewhere than to become aware of them in oneself). India's democracy has remained healthy largely because it has so far managed to surmount the tendency to see its own nation in a simple Manichean way (good nonviolent Hindus against bad violent Muslims) and instead to accept both the more complicated reality of multiple tensions and the possibility of a shared political life among people who are different. These same issues are intensely pertinent to America, which is similarly torn, today, between two pictures of itself. One Manichean picture simplistically portrays America and Americans as good and pure and its proclaimed enemies as an "axis of evil." The other picture, a product of self-criticism and nuanced perception, portrays America as a complex and flawed society, in which forces bent on control and hierarchy vie with forces that promote democratic equality. At a deeper level, this second picture emphasizes that Americans, like people everywhere, are capable of both respect and aggression, of both democratic mutuality and anxious domination. As George Kennan wrote in 1990: "I wish I could believe that the human impulses which give rise to the nightmares of totalitarianism were ones which Providence had allocated only to other peoples and to which the American people had been graciously left immune. Unfortunately, I know this is not true . . . The fact of the matter is that there is a little bit of the totalitarian buried somewhere, way down deep, in each and every one of us."

My argument, then, is focused on India, but it is also pertinent to other countries: for, as Nehru said on the eve of India's independence, "all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart." Perhaps, in the end, my argument is above all for my own nation, which more than any other has imagined that it can live apart, so that it will not merely see India's complexities, but also attend to its own, in what Nehru described as "this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments."

The story of the Gujarat pogrom has been told many times, by many people. The Indian press and publishing industry have made available a wide range of high-quality materials to scholars and others seeking to understand these events. But little of this work has been noticed in the United States and even in Europe. One way of thinking of my own contribution, then, is as that of a loudspeaker, making those unheard voices audible to Americans. To try to counteract the widespread neglect of India in U.S. curricula and the U.S. and European media, in the following pages I present not only the event itself but also a good deal of historical and legal background about the Indian democracy, which I try to do in as engaging a way as I can, not rivaling the contributions of leading historians of India, but retelling the story with an eye to the themes that matter in the argument to come.

Inevitably I have my own slant on events. Some of the book's contentions—its defense of Tagore's conception of education, its claim that the arts and humanities play a major role in democratic public culture, its gender-based analysis of ethnic violence, its account of the role of emotions and the imagination in political decency and political extremism—are further developments of my own ideas as a political philosopher. My views also work their way into the historical background narrative, in my reflections on the contributions of each of India's distinguished founders.

Another uncharacteristic thesis of the book (in contemporary Indian terms) is its contention that religion can in principle offer a great deal to the public culture of a pluralistic democracy. So thoroughly has religious extremism tarnished the reputation of religion in the minds of democratic and pluralistic Indians that I find that the story of religion's role in the U.S. civil rights movements is frequently greeted with surprise—despite the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. modeled his entire approach on that of Gandhi. I hope, then, that this (Gandhian) aspect of the book will also make a contribution to the debate in India, where the liberal face of religion is underdeveloped and undervalued.

When an American who has focused on general issues in political philosophy and the ethical underpinnings of international development, as well as the nature of the human emotions and the history of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, writes a book on Indian politics, the choice requires explanation. What is the nature of my involvement with this region of the world? What might there be in the nature of that involvement that might affect the nature of the account I shall give?

As a political philosopher, feminist, and teacher of law, I have long viewed India as, in effect, my second country. For eight years (1985–1993) I worked in a research project at the United Nations World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, where (in collaboration with Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel laureate in Economics) I focused on the economic and cultural problems of India. When I set out to write a book proposing human rights norms for women's development worldwide, I chose India as my focus, again studying Indian culture and history, visiting the country often, and going out into the field with activists to observe their work with literacy and employment. More recently I have been a consultant with the UN Development Programme's New Delhi office, writing part of a study on gender and governance. I have also participated with a group of legal activists in Delhi, the Lawyers' Collective, working on human rights for women and the relationship between women's rights and the various systems of religion-based "personal law." In 2004 I was a visiting professor at the Centre for Political Science at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. For the past ten years I have also lectured in various parts of India and written extensively on India's legal and constitutional traditions. More important, I have traveled to India so many times that it now feels like my second home.

The case of India shows that people can embrace the same country for entirely different reasons. Many American scholars of my generation got involved with India because they connected Hindu spirituality to the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s. Some of them converted to Hinduism, and others followed Hindu gurus. These people tend to focus on the mystical aspects of Indian culture and tradition. Few of the people who were drawn to India in this way became scholars, but those who did have produced outstanding work in Sanskrit, comparative religion, and Indian literature and art. Still others were drawn to the study of India out of respect for a religion that makes sexuality a daily and even sacred aspect of human life, rather than condemning it or concealing it, as do so many religions. (This group overlaps with the first; both share a keen interest in Hindu religion and its sacred texts.) These scholars tend to focus on texts and works of art that show the gods as playful and complex sexual beings.

My own relationship to the Indian world is more intensely political, focused on issues of social justice. So too is my relationship to religion.

(I am a rationalistic Reform Jew who thinks of the moral law as the core of what religion is about.) My interest in India began in 1986 during my work with Amartya Sen, and the passion for justice that has animated Sen's career is also the motive that leads me to love India. My first writing on India was an article coauthored with Sen, concerning cultural traditions' internal self-criticism. Sen's own interest in India's traditions of criticism, rational debate, and public deliberation shaped my own relationship to India from the first, as did my deep ties to the culture of Santiniketan and the legacy of Rabindranath Tagore—not to mention my long engagement with the energy and creativity of the Indian women's movement.

As a young girl, I was ill at ease with my elite WASP heritage, which traced its origins to the *Mayflower*, and with an upbringing on Philadelphia's Main Line that was very cut off from people of other races and religions. I found the atmosphere stifling, emotionally arid, and not at all conducive to love. There was little talk at dinner, and a lot of polite silence. Just as I converted to Judaism, married a Jew, and joined the cause of the underdog in my own country, and just as I take delight in the comparative noisiness and emotional openness of American Jewish culture, so too I am sure that my passion for India (and particularly for Bengali culture) reflects a similar enthusiasm for the colonial underdog; for the freedom struggle, which I celebrate enthusiastically every August 15; and, very significantly, for the emotional openness and sheer love of talk that I associate with Indian (perhaps especially Bengali) social life. What draws me to India, then, is not so much its spiritual heritage, although I deeply respect that, as its diversity, noisiness, emotionality, sheer energy, and passion for justice, together with the success of a democracy constructed out of a heritage of oppression.

Inevitably my orientation affects the focus of this book, although I hope I have been fair to other aspects of the nation. I am sure, too, that the book is somewhat affected by the fact that my work in India has brought me into contact, largely, with three groups of people: academics, activists, and poor women and girls. I have not met very many representatives of the technological and scientific middle class that plays such a large part in India's current success. When I do (as in the case of Gurcharan Das, though he is a rather exceptional representative of that group), I try to learn as much as I can.

Given my love of India, it has been with sadness and alarm that over

the past fifteen years I have witnessed the religious animosity that has threatened this great nation, and with joy that I have seen the democracy demonstrate its resilience and its deep commitment to pluralism, overcoming a profound threat to religious freedom and triumphing over a monolithic ideology based on homogeneity and fear. The story of this resilience and this triumph has much to offer to other nations, in Europe and North America, who are waging their own struggle against the refusal to live with others.

Acknowledgments

I have enormous debts of gratitude to many who have made my work in India possible over the years, and who have helped me in this particular project. At the top of this list are some lifelong friends and colleagues without whom I could not have written anything about India, and whose insights and friendship sustain me in my work and in my life: Amita, Amartya, Antara, Nandana, Indrani, Kabir, and Nabaneeta Dev Sen, and Antara's husband, Prateek Kandilal; Zoya and Mushirul Hasan; Bina Agarwal; Tanika and Sumit Sarkar; Jasodhara, Amiya, Tista, and Barnita Bagchi, and Tista's husband, Aditya Bhattacharjea; Malini Parthasarathy; Viji Srinivasan (who died as I was completing the first draft of this book in the spring of 2005); and Martha Alter Chen. (One of the greatest pleasures of acknowledging the many couples and families above is that they are by no means anomalies—husband-wife academic couples who share intellectual, political, and domestic commitments on a basis of real equality, with adult children who join actively in discussion.) Others with whom I have worked and talked with pleasure and profit over the years, and whose work has helped shape my ideas, include, in India, Indira Jaising, Kumkum Sangari, Shefali Moitra, Gurcharan Das, Kalyani Menon-Sen, Gurpreet Mahajan, Niraja Jayal, Neera Burra, Brenda McSweeney, Seeta Prabhu, R. Sudarshan, and Rajeev Bhargava; and, in America, Amrita Basu, Akeel Bilgrami, Wendy Doniger, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, Sunil Khilnani, Surendra Kumar (former consul general of India in Chicago, now stationed in Kenya), and Bhama Srinivasan.

It is with special gratitude that I thank three Indians who went through the entire book and gave me detailed comments: Bina Agarwal, Tista Bagchi, and Zoya Hasan. In addition, comments from two anonymous but highly knowledgeable readers for Harvard University Press

helped me avoid many errors and strengthen the book's overall argument. Other very helpful comments, in the United States, came from Mona Mehta, Wendy Doniger, Jeffrey Israel, Alan J. Nussbaum, Cass Sunstein, and the members of the seminar series "Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective" at Yale University.

I have been lucky to have expert research assistance during this project from Mona Mehta, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago, who accompanied me on most of the interviewing for this book and then transcribed all the interviews from tape recordings. Mona, whose field of study is modern Indian politics and who came from Mumbai to Chicago to work with Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph, is fluent in Hindi and Gujarati; in some cases this expertise has been invaluable in making contacts with people who are not fluent in English. In the case of K. K. Shastri (head of the VHP in Gujarat), she interviewed him alone after we had seen him together, because he was so impressed with her knowledge of Gujarati and her interest in his ideas. In the latter days of my research, I was also helped by law student Shaheen Haji, research assistant for our Center for Comparative Constitutionalism, who brought the valuable perspective of a Gujarati Muslim, raised in California, to my thinking. Mayank Patel, a student at Emory University, kindly read my chapter on the diaspora community and offered valuable criticisms in a long essay, focusing on the Swaminarayan movement. He gave me a much fuller picture of that movement and helped me avoid errors.

Above all, I am grateful to the many people who were willing to be interviewed for the book, and who gave me permission to use their taped remarks. Among these I am particularly grateful to the ones who were generous enough to speak with someone who was likely to defend a position different from their own. Many people on the right proved difficult to contact in the first place. Others (especially after the election of 2004) did not return phone calls. Ramesh Rao traveled a long distance to meet with me, and we had a long and interesting conversation. But because he later withdrew permission for the use of material from that discussion, I discuss Rao's ideas solely on the basis of his published writings. For the most part I do the same with Vishal Agarwal, who conditioned his permission on my contacting him first to show him the references to himself, but who then stopped returning my e-mails. I therefore am forced to omit our very useful taped conversation, and to refer to only one piece of our e-mail communication, which he had separately given me permission to use. I regret this outcome, because Agarwal impressed me as a thoughtful, civil, and reasonable man. My thanks are therefore particularly warm to others who did not impose such limitations.

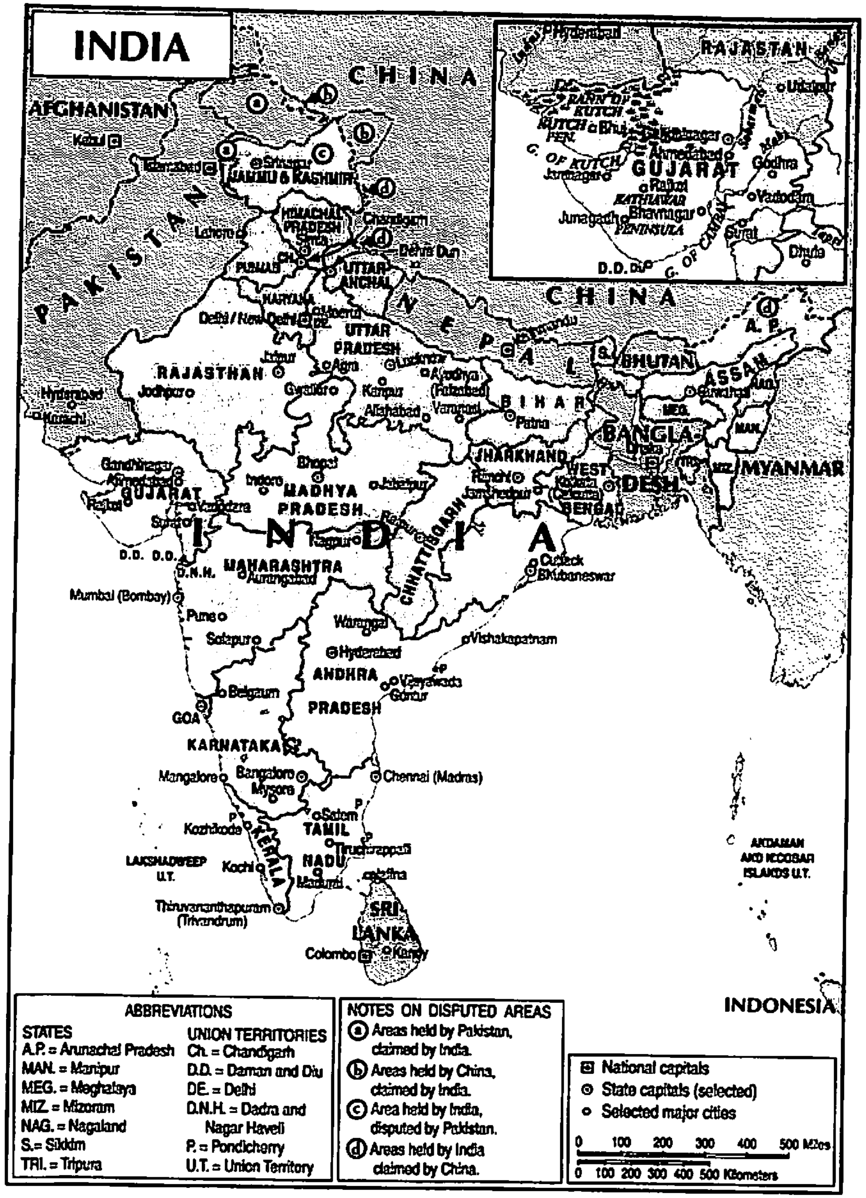
I owe a debt of another sort to the many people connected to my work and life in the United States who have supported me in this project, whether they knew anything about India or not: to the dean of the University of Chicago Law School, Saul Levmore, who supported my research with travel assistance and personal enthusiasm; to my daughter, Rachel, whose work as a historian of the Weimar Republic in Germany offered me valuable comparative insights and who has always been a joy to argue with; above all, to Cass, who teases me by asking how my book on "Indiana" is going and how long I will be planning to spend in "Indianapolis" or "Bloomington"—and who has lovingly supported all my trips and preoccupations.

Joyce Seltzer has been, as always, an inspiring and exemplary editor, supporting the project from its inception and offering wise advice. At the manuscript editing stage, Ann Hawthorne supplied her usual standards of rigor and judgment, making the book much better in many ways. I was lucky enough to have proofreader/indexers Jennifer Johnson and Nathan Rothschild, who read the book with understanding and care, and who detected many errors that had escaped my notice. The excellent map was drawn by Philip Schwartzberg.

This book is dedicated to a person whom I loved, and whose spirit I hope it in some way embodies: Amita Sen, dancer, writer, and editor. As a little girl, daughter of the distinguished Sanskritist Kshiti Mohan Sen, she came to Santiniketan when her father joined the faculty of Rabindranath Tagore's school. She inspired Tagore's well-known poem *Chota mai* while playing outside his study. Amita grew into a beautiful woman and dancer. A pupil in Tagore's Santiniketan school, she became one of the leading performers in his dance-dramas. Called the "Green Fairy" after one of her leading roles, she exemplified passion, daring, and the combination of both with intense discipline and focus. Her husband, a chemical engineer (also named Sen), became a leading adviser for Tagore's rural development projects. The couple had a son

and a daughter. The son's name, Amartya, was chosen by Tagore; it means "the deathless one." Amita later wrote two books about Tagore as teacher, choreographer, and dancer. A prolific writer and editor, and in a sense the tutelary spirit of Santiniketan, she exemplified the best traditions of Bengali humanism: a passion for social justice; grace and warmth combined with the love of talk; a love of humanity in all people, whether rich or poor, literate or illiterate, patrician or laborer; a devotion to the civic value of the imagination; and, finally, an understanding that the arts and humanities are crucial for a decent public culture. I visited her every year, staying at her home, "Pratichi," in Santiniketan. We talked for many hours. I loved her very much. I had already written this paragraph and the dedication to her, and had told her of my plan. She died of cardiac arrest at her home in Santiniketan on August 22, 2005, at the age of ninety-two. Now I have had to change the tenses of some of my verbs, but her indomitable spirit is not extinguished. I hope that some of it is here.

THE CLASH WITHIN



INTRODUCTION

While Americans have focused on the war on terror, Iraq, and the Middle East, democracy has been under siege in another part of the world. India—the most populous of all democracies, and a country whose Constitution protects human rights even more comprehensively than our own—has been in crisis. Until the spring of 2004, its parliamentary government was increasingly controlled by right-wing Hindu extremists who condone and in some cases actively support violence against minorities, especially the Muslim minority. Many seek fundamental changes in India's pluralistic democracy. Despite their electoral loss, these political groups and the social organizations allied with them remain extremely powerful. Democracy and the rule of law have shown impressive strength and resilience, but the future is unclear.

What has been happening in India is a serious threat to the future of democracy in the world. The fact that it has yet to enter the consciousness of most Americans is evidence of the way in which terrorism and the war on Iraq have distracted Americans from events and issues of fundamental significance. If we really want to understand the impact of religious nationalism on democratic values, India currently provides a deeply troubling example, and one without which any understanding of the more general phenomenon is dangerously incomplete. It also provides an example of how democracy can survive the assault of religious extremism, from which all modern democracies can learn.

In order to understand India's current situation, we need to turn to a set of events that show more clearly than any others how far the ideals of respectful pluralism and the rule of law have been threatened by religious ideology. These events are a terrible instance of genocidal violence; but they are more than that. The deeper problem they reveal is that of violence aided and abetted by the highest levels of government

and law enforcement, a virtual announcement to minority citizens that they are unequal before the law and that their lives are not worth legal and police protection.

The focal point of the recent controversy over religion and democracy in India, and of this book, is a religious/ethnic pogrom that took place in the state of Gujarat in western India in February–March 2002. The precipitating event was an incident near the station at Godhra, in which one car of a train of Hindu pilgrims erupted into flames, killing fifty-eight men, women, and children, almost all Hindus. The fire was immediately blamed on local Muslims living near the tracks. (As we shall see, forensic reconstruction has cast grave doubt on this allegation.)

In the days that followed, wave upon wave of violence swept through the state. The attackers were Hindus, many of them highly politicized, shouting Hindu-right slogans. There is copious evidence that the violent retaliation was planned by Hindu extremist organizations before the precipitating event. Over several weeks, approximately two thousand Muslims were killed. Approximately half of the victims were women, many of whom were raped and tortured before being killed and burned. Children were killed with their parents; fetuses were ripped from the bellies of pregnant women to be tossed into the fire.

Most alarming was the total breakdown in the rule of law—not only at the local level but also at those of state and national government. Police were ordered not to stop the violence. Some egged it on. Gujarat's chief minister, Narendra Modi, rationalized and even encouraged the murders. Meanwhile the national government showed a culpable indifference, suggesting that religious riots were inevitable wherever Muslims lived alongside Hindus, and that troublemaking Muslims must have been to blame. Leading politicians conveyed the message that government would treat the nation's citizens unequally: some would receive the full protection of the law, and others would not. Prosecutions resulting from the riots have faced related problems: the bias of local judges, the intimidation and bribery of witnesses.

Gujarat provides a vivid example of the bad things that can occur when a leading political party bases its appeal on a religious nationalism wedded to ideas of ethnic homogeneity and purity. We need to understand this example in order to begin forming an adequate conception

of the problem of religious nationalism in today's world. But Gujarat also shows us something else: the resilience of pluralistic democracy, the ability of well-informed citizens to turn against religious nationalism and to rally behind the values of pluralism and equality. In May 2004 the voters of India went to the polls in large numbers and gave the Hindu right a resounding defeat. Because exit polls, taken in cities and towns, did not predict this result, it is clear that impoverished rural people played a major role in giving India a new government.

Some of the issues that led to the rejection of the right were economic rather than religious. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party, the political wing of the Hindu right) had used the campaign slogan "India Shining," emphasizing economic gains through foreign investment in the cities. But the rural poor had seen few benefits from globalization, and their lives were not particularly shining. Many rural areas have no safe water supply, no reliable electricity, no public transportation, and no schools. (The literacy rate is around 60 percent for the nation as a whole; this average conceals large rural/urban and regional differences, and also differences by sex: the female literacy rate is no higher than 50 percent.) Voters living in such inadequate conditions reacted angrily to the claim that India was doing splendidly, a claim that excluded them and denigrated their struggles.

The economy, however, was not the only major electoral issue. Prominent as well was a widespread popular rejection of religious extremism. The Congress Party, which won, had throughout the campaign drawn attention to religious tensions and strenuously repudiated the BJP's idea of India as a nation for Hindus first and foremost. Both party leader Sonia Gandhi and the new prime minister, economist Manmohan Singh, repeatedly insisted that India is a nation built upon equal respect for all religious groups and all citizens. In his first speech as prime minister, Singh drew attention to this issue. "I do not want to begin my career by accusing the previous government," he said. "But divisive forces were allowed a free play, which I believe is extremely injurious to orderly development . . . We as a nation must have a firm determination that these things should never happen."[1] Singh, a Sikh, is India's first prime minister to come from a religious minority.

This book, then, is a story of democracy's near-collapse into religious terror and of democracy's survival—a story that has important

lessons to offer to all nations struggling with problems of religious extremism. When I began to write it, the story seemed almost unrelievedly grim. Now it has become clear that it is a story of what can go right as well as what can go wrong, of what preserves democracy as well as what threatens it. From this story we Americans can learn a good deal about democracy and its future as we try to act responsibly in a dangerous world.

Equally important, if not more important, India's story is of intrinsic interest and significance. Through the story of Gujarat, Americans can begin to understand better the political and religious dynamics of the world's most populous democracy, a nuclear power, and a nation that will play an increasingly large role in the world. India is typically not well covered by the U.S. media or by education in U.S. schools and colleges. During the ascendancy of the Hindu right, when intelligent diplomatic pressure could have achieved change, U.S. foreign policy was largely indifferent to internal tensions in India, focusing only on the threat of nuclear conflict with Pakistan. American ignorance of India's history and current situation was largely to blame for such omissions. Today U.S. policymakers continue to focus on nuclear deal-making, ignoring the nation's internal dynamics.[2]

Whereas events in the Middle East and controversies about U.S. policy there are intensively covered by American media, India's struggle with religious extremism, and the intellectual controversies it has engendered, are little known, and the lessons available from its experience little appreciated. As a result most Americans are still inclined to believe that religious extremism in the developing world is entirely a Muslim matter, and that if there is religious tension in a nation, Muslims are the ones to blame. These simplistic assumptions are inapplicable to India, but they are exactly what leading members of the Hindu right want Americans and other Westerners to think. To the extent that they succeed in projecting a scare-image of Muslims, they deflect attention from their own crimes.

When people talk of a "clash of civilizations," meaning a clash between "Islam" and "the West," or opine that Islam is not compatible with democracy, I find that they typically know little about South Asia, the term usually used to refer to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and sometimes Indonesia and Malaysia (and distinct

from Southeast Asia, which refers to Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos). Few know, for example, that Bangladesh is a thriving, if poor, Muslim-majority (about 85 percent) democracy whose two major parties are led by women, with a constitution, similar to India's, that provides strong protection of rights (in a section of the Constitution titled "Fundamental Rights") and public policies that strongly support women's education and empowerment. Its national anthem, "Amar Sonar Bangla" (My Golden Bengal), is a song written by Hindu Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. As Amartya Sen says, "This must be very confusing to those who see the contemporary world as a 'clash of civilizations'—with 'the Muslim civilization,' 'the Hindu civilization,' and 'the Western civilization,' each forcefully confronting the others."[3] Few know that the Muslims of Bangladesh and the approximately 13 percent of India's citizens who are Muslims have no ties to international Islamic radicalism or to terrorist organizations, and relatively few political or organizational ties even to Pakistan. (The struggle over Kashmir is an obvious exception, but it is not related to the events that are my focus.) India is the third-largest Muslim country in the world (after Indonesia and Pakistan),[4] with more Muslims than Bangladesh and nearly as many as Pakistan. Muslims in India are by and large a hard-working impoverished minority, who have lived alongside Hindus for centuries and who today participate in democratic self-governance at all levels. A recent study has shown that they support education for girls even more strongly than the Hindu population.[5] Islamic fundamentalism has no grip in India, despite discrimination and even persecution, and the inclusion of Muslims in prominent positions in the new government is a hopeful sign for the future.

In the case of India, the threat to democracy comes not from Muslims or from any "clash" between European and non-European civilizations, but from something much more sadly familiar: a romantic European conception of nationalism, based on ideas of blood, soil, purity, and the Volksgeist. The founders of the Hindu right in the 1920s and 1930s greatly admired the early fascist versions of these ideas that they found in Italy and Germany. They worked hard to make these ideas popular in India through highly effective grassroots organizations prominently featuring programs for young boys. Their ideas were appealing in India for some of the same reasons they were so appealing in

Germany in these decades: people who see themselves as having been humiliated and emasculated by conquest are inclined to turn to thoughts of purity and a cleansing by violence to wipe away the stain. Hindus in India have internalized a historical narrative according to which they are a pure and peaceful civilization that has been conquered again and again: in the Middle Ages by a variety of Muslim invaders, in more recent times by the British. The painful experience of colonial subjugation, together with the racism that accompanied it, left many Hindus in India vulnerable to a simplification of reality and to the refuge offered by romantic/fascist European ideas of blood and purity. Instead of seeing a "clash of civilizations" here, Europeans and Euro-Americans looking at India should see a simulacrum of their own ugly history, made more malign by the anger that accompanies the repudiation of longstanding colonial domination. The appeal of these ideas was enhanced by the failure of liberal/pluralist leaders, after the deaths of Tagore and Gandhi, to mount an effective program of grassroots mobilization that would link the intense emotions of religion and patriotism to a program of cooperation and mutual respect.

When we are dealing with a complex and variegated world, the simplistic notion of a "clash of civilizations" is not helpful. What we call "Western civilization" contains many incompatible ingredients, as we easily see if we survey the history of the twentieth century, with its aspiration to universal human rights and its descent into horrific cruelty. (When asked by a British journalist what he thought of "Western civilization," Gandhi said, "I think it would be a very good idea." Elsewhere, however, he mentioned Ruskin and Tolstoy as two of his primary influences.) Even the normative ideas embedded in "Western civilization" are highly heterogeneous; they include liberalism, fascism, Marxism, various different religious conceptions, and many others.

The category "non-Western" is still less helpful. The nations of Asia and Africa have little in common with one another as a group. They have no shared history or shared political, philosophical, or religious values. All, moreover, are internally heterogeneous and are experiencing sectarian and other struggles, including struggles for equality for women or for other marginalized groups. Just as some religions that originated in Asia and Africa (Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam) have influenced the West, so various Western ideas, such as the ideas of

Marxism, have had enormous influence on Asia and Africa. Speaking in terms of "West" and "non-West" often leads to crude errors: we forget that modern mathematics, which played a key role in the European Enlightenment, had its origins in Arab culture; we forget that Christianity had its origins in a part of the world that nowadays is regarded and treated as "non-Western." We forget that the roots of ideas of human equality, democracy, and human rights existed in many different cultures and that their full development in "our own" is a very recent matter. We forget that ideas of religious toleration and equal respect were well known in India by the time of Ashoka's empire, in the third century B.C.E., a very long time before they were known in Europe. (Ashoka, a convert to Buddhism from Hinduism, wrote eloquently of the importance of respect among the different religions; he said that by denigrating another person's religion a person degrades his own.) Thinking in terms of a "clash of civilizations," in short, leads us to ignore both the heterogeneity of all known civilizations and the interpenetration and mutual influence among cultures that is a fact of human history.[6]

In talking about India it is not enough to avoid the misleading West/non-West dichotomy. It is also important not to employ a simple model of a single "civilization," ignoring both internal diversity and cultural borrowing. There is probably no nation more internally diverse than India: twenty-two official languages, over three hundred languages that are actually spoken, major religious groups including Hindus (with many different regional cults), Muslims, Christians (Protestant and Catholic, and each of these stemming from several different European origins), Parsis, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, a small number of Jews. Regional differences are immense; some regions, especially in the south, had for centuries more interaction with other parts of South and Southeast Asia (and with Europe) than with the rest of what is now called India.

It is also futile to try to separate the British elements of "Indian culture" from the rest of what is Indian. By now India has creatively appropriated the colonial culture and intertwined it with its own traditions. Indian English is different from British and American English—still fully intelligible, but a distinct dialect. Today it is the dialect of English with the largest number of speakers. It would make no sense at

this point (although elements of the Hindu right disagree) to displace English on the grounds of its colonial origin. It is a lingua franca in a nation of linguistic and cultural differences, and Indian English is a supple and expressive literary, legal, and political language. Nobody could read an Indian novel in English, or an Indian Supreme Court opinion, and deny that Indians have made this instrument their own in ways that give reason for pride, not shame and repudiation. The British were appalling tyrants, exploiters, and racists. But their culture is now part of Indian culture for better or for worse—and often for better on both sides, in the sense that independent India has greatly improved many of the elements (legal, literary, and artistic) that it has borrowed.

Anyone who wants to understand today's India, then, needs to approach the nation with curiosity, looking to see the variety that is there, rather than judging prematurely that a given custom or idea is the "real" India and another one less "authentic." Such artificial ideas of purity and authenticity are not only misleading; they are also the very ideas that have been exploited politically by the Hindu right in trying to cast non-Hindus as alien polluters of the national fabric. They know that they find a receptive audience in America, since Americans (in addition to their anxieties about Muslims) feel guilt about the legacy of colonialism and are inclined to accept the fiction of a pure unsullied "other" that was polluted by external forces. Usually such fictions mask a history that was always divided, contentious, and heterogeneous. Many of the painful struggles over the teaching of history in today's India concern just such soothing but deeply misleading fictions of the past. One cannot understand the current political debate if one begins from the position of romantic nationalism that the Hindu right has projected.

It would be a serious misreading of this book to see it as an assault on Hindu religion or Hindu traditions. All traditions have good and bad features. On the whole, however, the traditions of Hinduism have been strongly conducive to pluralism, toleration, and peace. What happened in Gujarat was not violence done by Hinduism; it was violence done by people who have hijacked a noble tradition for their own political and cultural ends. Piety and spirituality would seem to play little or no role in the choices of Hindu-right politicians; nationalism plays an all-important role, and religious ideas and images are reconstructed for

nationalistic purposes (as the loyal yet kindly monkey god Hanuman becomes a ferocious enemy of Muslims, as even the playful candy-loving Ganesha becomes, at times, a muscled warrior with sword held high).

Even before the crisis of 2002, tensions between religious communities were increasingly defining lives in many regions of India. Poor women in Gujarat seeking to work together for women's human rights were increasingly driven apart by community organizers who fomented hatred, making it difficult for Hindu women to live and work alongside Muslim women. Female students in Lucknow, once a home of Hindu-Muslim cooperation and amity, observed or experienced daily threats of physical violence from organized brigades of Hindu-right students, who menaced them with physical abuse if they wore blue jeans or celebrated Valentine's Day or birthdays (customs deemed unacceptably Western). New textbooks commissioned by the BJP's minister of education, Murli Manohar Joshi, were beginning to teach young children habits of intolerance and suspicion. ("Kabeer is a nice boy," one first-grade reader goes, "even though he is a Muslim.") In the universities, all public and therefore susceptible to political pressure, academics reacted with alarm to assaults on their freedom to speak and publish about both history and current events. Academic friends of long standing told me of threatening phone calls in the night, of efforts to deprive them of prestigious fellowships.

One should not exaggerate these threats: Indian universities remained strong bastions of academic freedom even during the ascendancy of the BJP, and the national press is more free in some crucial respects than our media in the United States: the leading newspapers are more diversely and independently owned, and thus somewhat less vulnerable to economic pressures that lead to a degeneration of journalistic quality. The level of debate and reporting in the major newspapers and at least some of the television networks is impressively high. Any academic who wants to get involved in a national debate can do so, as is not the case in the United States. Nonetheless, there was, and still is, an atmosphere of anti-Muslim (and sometimes anti-Christian) feeling that is deeply alarming.

Consider the movie *Dev*, a popular "Bollywood" film released in 2004, starring the great actor Amitabh Bachchan and directed by ad-

mired independent filmmaker Govind Nihalani. This film, loosely based on the events of Gujarat, features Amitabh Bachchan as the "good cop" Dev, who resents being told to sit on his hands by his corrupt superior Tej (played by another great actor, Om Puri) while thousands of innocent Muslims are dying. The underlying message of the film is that ordinary people want peace and harmony; religious animosity is whipped up by politicians for the sake of power, and it is bad for everyone. Hindus and Muslims can live in amity if only politicians will stop trying to use them for their own gain. The movie ends with the suicide of the corrupt cop, who can no longer live with himself after his righteous friend's defection and death, and with the adoption of a young Muslim lawyer into the good cop's family as a surrogate son. And yet, *Dev* had a funny way of showing its good intentions. The Muslims in the movie were depicted as having a highly organized terrorist organization—for which there is absolutely no evidence—and the Hindus who led the riots were shown as having no organized movement, something for which there is a great deal of evidence. Thus the movie played to its audience's fears of Muslims and failed to confront the organized reality of the Hindu right's involvement in the Gujarat violence. Moreover, although the director's intention was clearly to show that the police had behaved badly in not stopping the rioting, and although audiences in many parts of the nation probably reacted as he intended, when I watched this film in Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, right where some of the worst incidents had occurred two years earlier, the mood of the audience was staunchly anti-Muslim.[7] People kept cheering on the bad cop and jeering at the young Muslim hero.

The events in Gujarat, and the intense national criticism they engendered, mark a clash between two different conceptions of the Indian nation and two sorts of Indian patriots. One sort sees India as a pluralistic nation, built on ideas of respect for different regional, ethnic, and religious traditions, and united by a commitment to democratic and egalitarian norms. The other sort believes that this morally grounded unity is too fragile, that only the unity of ethnic homogeneity can really make a strong nation. This clash exists, in one or another form, in many if not most modern democracies.

One way of understanding the choices before India today is to consider the debate about a national anthem. Ever since independence, two poems have been competing for this coveted status. The losing candidate in 1950, now vociferously championed by the Hindu right, is a song known as "Bande Mataram" (Hail Motherland), written by the Bengali novelist Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Chatterjee himself was a complex figure who had subtle ideas about nationalism that are much debated.[8] It is uncertain whether he in fact endorsed the sentiments of his song, which occurs in one of his novels. The song itself is a beautiful poem that can be read innocuously, as it was by philosopher Sri Aurobindo when he translated it into English. Nonetheless, as championed and interpreted by the Hindu nationalist movement beginning in the early twentieth century—under the influence of European romantic ideas of nationalism—it expresses a conception of Indian identity as a matter of adoring the motherland as a goddess and being prepared to shed one's blood in her cause:

> Mother, I bow to thee!
> Rich with thy hurrying streams,
> Bright with thy orchard gleams,
> Cool with thy winds of delight,
> Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
> Mother free.
>
> Glory of moonlight dreams
> Over thy branches and lordly streams,
> Clad in thy blossoming trees,
> Mother, giver of ease.
> Laughing low and sweet!
> Mother, I kiss thy feet,
> Speaker sweet and low!
> Mother, to thee I bow.
>
> Who hath said thou are weak in thy lands,
> When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands
> And seventy million voices roar
> Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
> . . .
> Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
> Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,

Thou the love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers death.[9]

"Bande Mataram" contains some beautiful imagery, and one can understand why it captivated readers, then and later. However, some aspects of its vision of the nation disturbed early proponents of Indian independence and still disturb its democratic citizens now, especially when the song crops up on websites promoting violence against minorities: the song's insistence that the motherland should be an object of slavish and uncritical devotion, its militaristic and potentially violent conception of that devotion, and, above all, its idea of the unity of India and Indians as depending on a blood tie to a mother, an idea that seems at least potentially exclusionary. In Rabindranath Tagore's 1915 novel *The Home and the World* (to be discussed in Chapter 3), the young wife Bimala, excited by the fervor of the nationalists and their charismatic leader, Sandip, criticizes her husband for his lack of enthusiasm for the Chatterjee anthem and the slogan it has become. After his death she recalls his response:

> And yet it was not that my husband refused to support *Swadeshi* [the boycott of foreign goods], or was in any way against the Cause. Only he had not been able whole-heartedly to accept the spirit of *Bande Mataram.*
>
> "I am willing," he said, "to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for right, which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it."[10]

The husband's discussions with Sandip make it clear that the spirit of "Bande Mataram" is indeed exclusionary: Muslims will not be equal citizens in Sandip's projected nation. Ten years later V. D. Savarkar, one of the founders of the Hindu right, memorably argued that the true Indian was one for whom the motherland and the holy land were one and the same. For this reason, he claimed, Muslims and Christians could never be true Indians. Tagore's husband, by contrast, along with critics of the song today, prefers a more inclusive conception of Indian unity.

The current national anthem of India, adopted on January 24,

1950, is a song whose words and music were written in 1911 by Tagore. As one of the earliest critics of "Bande Mataram," he constructed an alternative vision of national unity and national devotion. Known as "Jana Gana Mana," the song, in English translation, goes like this:

> Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,
> Dispenser of India's destiny.
> Thy name rouses the hearts of the Punjab,
> Sindhu, Gujarat, and Maratha,
> Of the Dravid, and Orissa and Bengal.
> It echoes in the hills of Vindhyas and Himalayas, mingles in the music of the
> Jamuna and Ganga and is chanted by
> The waves of the Indian sea.
> They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise,
> The saving of all people waits in thy hand,
> Thou dispenser of India's destiny.
> Victory, victory, victory to thee.[11]

The song was first sung at a 1911 meeting of the all-India Congress (the movement that later spearheaded the independence movement and eventually became the leading political party). Opponents of the song repeatedly charge that it was written to commemorate a visit by King George V, and that the addressee of the song is the British king. There is, however, no foundation for this claim. Tagore repeatedly stated that the poem was addressed to the divine spirit of righteousness, understood in his own eclectic universalist way (in keeping with his humanist "religion of Man"); and his decision to return his knighthood after the British murdered innocent civilians at Amritsar in 1919 shows that he was not an uncritical admirer of the monarchy.[12] More important, his contemporaneous critique of the Chatterjee song in his novel shows that he repudiated all adoration directed at the nation itself or its human representatives. Only the universal spirit of morality deserves our worship. This spirit rules "all people" everywhere in the world, and it is also the "dispenser of India's destiny." Tagore makes it plain that all people in India's diverse ethnic and geographical regions

are equally animated by the love of rightness and justice. Some of these regions, at the time, were predominantly Muslim and some Hindu, some inhabited by Tamil/Dravidian people and some by speakers of languages descended from Sanskrit. Tagore pointedly includes them all. There is no mention of military force or violence; instead, the "dispenser of India's destiny" is the moral law, and it is the victory of justice for which Indians ask when they sing it.

It is rare for a nation to have a national anthem that expresses the idea that humanity is above nationality, and righteousness above aggression. But the idea of a moral law that unswervingly guides our destiny is deeply rooted in Indian traditions, more deeply perhaps than it is in Euro-American traditions, where such ideas are associated with a critical and countertraditional Enlightenment intelligentsia rather than with traditional religion. Indians connect these ideas to many sources, but prominently to the concept of *dharma,* or moral law, in ancient Hindu texts. Tagore's take on the traditional concept is humanist and critical, but it also resonates with much that already animates India's traditional sense of its unity; no doubt this is why it has been able to win wide acceptance.

"Jana Gana Mana" is no pallid Kantian version of a rational national anthem. It is a stirringly beautiful blend of poetry and music, and it is sung with great passion by Indians throughout the nation (and abroad). They respond not only to its invocation of the natural beauty of the nation and its rich regional and ethnic diversity, but also to the idea that there is a spirit of right that rises above wrong and injustice, a very important thought for a formerly colonized people. The hero in Tagore's novel does not know how to use poetry to express his humanist vision; that is his great weakness. But Tagore himself, like Walt Whitman in America, did know how to create a public poetry of inclusiveness and moral commitment.

The conception of the nation's unity expressed in "Jana Gana Mana" is moral and political, not based on soil and ethnic belonging. India is like the United States in imagining its unity in this way; but such conceptions of national unity seem too pallid to some. Supporters of a more aggressive and romantic brand of nationalism keep returning to Chatterjee (whether they interpret him rightly or wrongly) for a tough-minded conception of the nation and its pride. At meetings of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the central organization of the Hindu right), the Chatterjee anthem is sung in its entirety. When the BJP came to power in state elections in 1993, it made singing of the anthem compulsory in all Delhi state schools.[13] This struggle between two anthems is essentially a struggle between two visions of patriotism, two visions of the nation, and indeed two visions of masculinity.

India's struggle is not confined to Indian territory: the Hindu right has a powerful and wealthy U.S. arm, which both funds suspicious activities in India, possibly activities associated with Gujarat's genocidal violence, and foments discord here and in Britain. Much of the animus of the U.S. group has focused on scholars. Colleagues here in the United States have been threatened with physical violence, even death, when they tell a version of long-ago history that does not suit the agenda of the Hindu right. Representatives of the Hindu right have made serious, though unsuccessful, attempts to have American universities remove troublesome scholars from assignments involving the teaching of ancient Hindu traditions. They are currently attempting to rewrite the textbooks from which American children learn the history of India. The complicated connections between the Hindu right in India and the expatriate community in the United States surely need careful scrutiny.

The clash between proponents of ethnoreligious homogeneity and proponents of a more inclusive and pluralistic type of citizenship is a clash between two types of people within a single society. At the same time, this clash expresses tendencies that are present, at some level, within most human beings: the tendency to seek domination as a form of self-protection, versus the ability to respect others who are different, and to see in difference a nation's richness rather than a threat to its purity. Because the internal clash in many ways lies behind and propels the cultural clash, the story of Gujarat must be a story of individuals as well as one of political movements. Gandhi believed that self-rule in the political sense must grow out of self-rule in the psychological sense: only by mastering the urges to dominate in ourselves can we become the sort of citizens who can live respectfully with others on terms of equality, and only by producing self-mastering citizens can a nation remain free from external domination. The events in Gujarat support Gandhi's contention. The violence there was not made by people who are born

evil. It was created out of a fearful and anxious view of the world, in which violent aggression is seen as the only antidote to centuries of humiliation. Its antidote is found in qualities of sympathy, imagination, and respectful acceptance that have deep roots in Indian traditions of education, although their victory is far from secure.

In order to investigate Gujarat's Gandhian dimensions further, this book explores the thinking and choices of representative figures from both camps, Hindu nationalists and pluralists, revealed through face-to-face interviews. These interviews provide a glimpse of the struggles that real people wage with themselves in a climate of political uncertainty, as well as the different approaches to life that motivate different political movements. It is important for democracies to consider how to foster citizens who can live on respectful terms with people of different beliefs. Seeing what such people are like, what struggles they encounter, and what sorts of imaginative and critical processes their education has developed in them helps us to think about what democracies need to strengthen. Seeing, by contrast, how young children are turned into the people who killed innocents in Gujarat helps us to think hard about what policies and perspectives must be avoided. *Swaraj,* self-rule, is a cherished political value. As Gandhi knew, however, it can be created and sustained only in a culture of self-criticism and compassion, and only by the sort of person who is not afraid to be one among equals.

1 Genocide in Gujarat

The moment one man comes out on the street, a stone in his
hand,
Two of us stand up to him with brickbats.
The moment a man falls, bloodied,
Bright-eyed we lay down seven more, as bloody
The gentle souls who once rushed to care for the wounded
Now stand at their balconies, clapping.
Someone's wife has been taken away in the dead of night?
Come, let's drag all the women from their village, stripped naked,
in broad daylight.
Some bastard has gouged out a boy's eye?
We'll rip out the eyes of the whole nation.

Nabaneeta Dev Sen, *"Festival"*

What Happened

On February 27, 2002, the Sabarmati express train arrived in the station at Godhra, in the western Indian state of Gujarat, packed with Hindu pilgrims *(kar sevaks)* who were returning from Ayodhya. Ayodhya, as the alleged birthplace of the god Rama (also called Ram), has been a focal point of Hindu anti-Muslim feeling for several decades. In 1992 a mob of Hindu zealots destroyed the sixteenth-century Babri Mosque there, claiming that it covered the remains of a Hindu temple. This pilgrimage, like many others in recent times, aimed at forcibly constructing a temple upon the disputed site, and the mood of the returning passengers, stymied by the government and the courts, was angry. Approximately seventeen hundred pilgrims were on the train, many of them without tickets. Trains in India are often

packed to the gills; reservations can mean little. In this case, confident in their political power, the pilgrims had simply boarded the train, which was already fully reserved. It is likely that the train held twice as many passengers as there were reservable places.[1] The unreserved cars were also totally packed. Many of the pilgrims had brought kerosene stoves and foodstuffs with them in order to have inexpensive meals during the five-day trip.

At 7:43 A.M. the train stopped at the Godhra station. Many of the passengers jumped out to stretch their limbs and get a cup of tea. Some of them got into arguments with Muslim vendors. One tea hawker had tea thrown on him; another selling cigarettes was not paid. Another tea hawker went into coach S-6 and was literally picked up and thrown out, because the *kar sevaks* did not want a Muslim selling tea to Hindus. Another report mentions that a Muslim vendor was beaten up when he refused to say "Jai Sri Ram" (Hail Ram). A boy tried to molest a fourteen-year-old Muslim girl named Sophia (though later reports that she was abducted proved false).

After the usual four-minute stop, the train started. Some of the *kar sevaks,* probably thirty or forty, were left behind on the platform, so their friends inside immediately pulled the emergency chain. (Testimony from the guards and the drivers confirms that the chain was pulled from inside the train, in four cars.) The other Hindus came and jumped on board the train, which had moved only about the length of four coaches. Meanwhile some young Muslims on the platform were yelling that they had been beaten up by Hindus. Word of these skirmishes spread into the neighboring area behind the platform, which is a poor Muslim area, "almost like a ghetto."[2] At this time of day lots of people—probably a thousand or two thousand—were around, drinking tea, getting water, sitting around.

A crowd began to gather outside the railway fencing. The *kar sevaks* faced off against the Muslim crowd through the fence. Some Hindus were still outside the train, some were on the train, and some got out when they saw that the train had stopped again. A battle began, the crowd pelting the Hindu passengers with bottles and bricks, the Hindu passengers pelting the crowd with the sharp flintlike stones that lie in the railway bed. It will never be possible to say who threw the first stone; what is clear is that both sides joined in with enthusiasm. "So,"

concludes forensic expert Mukhul Sinha, "if I may crudely use the word from tennis, advantage to the *kar sevaks* because they were on the railway lines and they had . . . stones with them . . . those beautiful railway stones are ready-made weapons." For seven minutes, while the train remained at a standstill, the skirmish continued, and animosity rapidly intensified. "These seven minutes," says Sinha, "set the future of India."

Slowly, its vacuum locks reset, the train pulled out. For some reason it soon stopped again. What happened during the next few minutes can be reconstructed only from forensic evidence. All that could be seen at the time was that coach S-6 erupted in flames. Fifty-eight men, women, and children died in the fire. There were many survivors—probably about a hundred and fifty people were originally in the car, and the rest managed to crawl to safety. Most of the dead were Hindus. Local fire trucks took more than thirty minutes to respond to the emergency, arriving after the fifty-eight people had died. A high proportion of the fire engines that finally arrived, sometime after 8:30, had defective water pumps. Some neighboring Muslims gave the fire brigade water from a well near the railway line, which they used to douse the fire. The fire was finally put out by 10:00 A.M.[3]

Because the explosion was immediately preceded by the skirmish with the Muslim mob, blame was immediately placed on Muslims, and the general belief was that Muslims had thrown flaming kerosene-soaked materials into the train or that some of the mob had somehow boarded the train and dumped a large quantity of flammable material and then ignited it. This view was accepted by people with a wide range of political views across the nation, not simply by those on the Hindu right. Not everyone agreed. Some thought that the evidence ought to be examined first. One former chief minister of Gujarat, Amarsinh Chaudhary, later argued that the blaze was set by Hindu nationalists, and his belief attracted some support, especially in light of later evidence that the subsequent rioting had been elaborately prepared. Most people, however, could not believe that any political group would cold-bloodedly incinerate so many of its own members. The one view that nobody seemed to defend at the time is the one that now, in retrospect, seems the most likely, namely that the explosion was a tragic accident. When disaster strikes, people like to have someone to blame. The survi-

vors also immediately blamed Muslims. As Mukhul Sinha says, "that was very natural . . . because they were attacked by the Muslims at that point of time, there is no doubt about that, and they had every reason to believe that, and it was for the authorities to take a dispassionate, objective look at the situation—which they didn't."

Local police immediately began to round up Muslims who were alleged to be behind the incident. Conspiracy became the watchword of the hour: the incident was part of organized terrorist activity, perhaps even orchestrated in Pakistan. The police investigating the incident overlooked evidence that did not fit their conspiracy theory. (A careful forensic examination of the railway car and the vestibule outside took place only months later, under pressure of national scrutiny.) All involved proceeded on the assumption that large groups of organized Muslims were involved, despite the fact that no solid evidence pointed in that direction. One elderly Muslim cleric, a scholar and community leader with no known links to terrorist activity, was arrested and as of May 2006 was still in detention, denied bail although there was no evidence linking him with the crime. The Indian Supreme Court, alert for a potential miscarriage of justice, has stayed his trial. Meanwhile, in jail, he has become ill.[4]

In the days that followed, wave upon wave of violence swept through the state. The attackers were Hindus, many of them highly politicized, shouting Hindu-right slogans, such as "Jai Sri Ram" and "Jai Hanuman" (a monkey god who represents loyalty in traditional mythology, but who is represented by the Hindu right as fiercely aggressive), along with "Kill, destroy!" "Slaughter!" There is copious evidence that the violence was planned before the precipitating event—at least in the sense that a long process of anti-Muslim indoctrination involving Hindu-right groups had led to widespread stockpiling of weapons and the circulation of lists of Muslim dwellings and businesses. (Some observers, however, downplay this last factor; they point out that Gujarat is so ghettoized that everyone knows where Muslims live, and which shop is a Muslim shop.)[5] The victims were primarily Muslims (along with an occasional Christian or Parsi) but also included Hindus who had ties with Muslims by business or marriage. Dwellings and businesses were torched along with their inhabitants. There was no connection between the identity of the victims and the identity of alleged perpetrators of the train attack: most attacks took place far from the original site. Many families of the original dead implored the mobs to stop the violence. Nonetheless, more than two thousand Muslims were killed in a few days, many by being burned alive in or near their homes. No group of persons was spared: young children were burned along with their families. Particularly striking were the mass rapes and mutilations of women. The typical tactic was first to rape or gang-rape the woman, often with gruesome tortures, and then to set her on fire and kill her.[6]

During the violence many Muslim areas of cities and villages, in parts of the state very far from the original incident, were burned to the ground. Muslims of all social classes fled for their lives. One of these, a former chief justice of the Rajasthani High Court living in retirement in Gujarat, later commented to an investigative tribunal that there was "a deliberate conspiracy to stifle criminal law."[7]

What this witness meant was that the carnage was aided and abetted both by the police and by local politicians. Police egged on the inciters, either passively, by failing to respond to calls for help, or, in some cases, more actively. It is now clear that police received orders not to intervene in the violence; those who disobeyed were punished by a variety of demotions and transfers. After the fact, police made it nearly impossible to register criminal complaints. Meetings were held between police and local government leaders, at which Hindus were called "we" and Muslims "they," and pleas of some officers to take action against rioters were rejected. Meanwhile local leaders of the Hindu right were seen shouting slogans and inciting the mob to further violence.

Particularly saddening was the active participation of tribal and lower-caste Hindus, *adivasis* and *dalits*,[8] in the violence against equally poor Muslims. The Hindu right has succeeded all too well in getting many lower-caste Hindus to put religion ahead of caste and class, and to fear as their enemies not the wealthy and upper-caste Hindus who have long oppressed them, but the Muslims who in most cases share their impoverished lifestyle.

Religiously motivated violence is nothing new in India, but there is widespread agreement that Gujarat was different. The incineration of many of the victims, indicating a sophisticated plan for total extermination, had not been seen before, nor had such widespread use of sexual

torture.[9] The violence was targeted against all Muslims as Muslims, and the accompanying propaganda indicated a desire to drive out all Muslims, as a dangerous internal enemy. New, as well, was the fact that Muslim sacred places not only were razed but were replaced by the saffron flags of the Hindu right and statues of Hanuman.[10] All in all, for those trying to make sense of what was happening, there was something about the violence that repeatedly summoned up ideas of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

To many people the most chilling aspect of the violence was the complicity of those charged with law enforcement, the message conveyed by those in power that the violence would continue unabated and that anyone who tried to stop it would be penalized or demoted. This aspect of the riots generated widespread outrage, especially in light of the fact that so many of the dead were defenseless women and children.

The closest precedent to Gujarat, in these terms, was the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi after Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984. There, too, during three days of rioting, police took little action to control the killings; there, too, Sikh homes were singled out as such, and no Sikh, however prosperous, felt safe. The celebrated writer Khushwant Singh has recounted how, when he telephoned the president of India to report a mob approaching his house, he was told by a secretary that he should take refuge in a Hindu's house. "I felt like a refugee in my country," said Singh to the commission investigating the riots. "In fact, I felt like a Jew in Nazi Germany." When asked why he had not contacted the police, he replied, "After I saw what the police were doing, I thought it pointless to ask for help."[11] As for the prime minister, Indira Gandhi's son Rajiv Gandhi, he stated: "When a mighty tree falls, the earth around is bound to shake," thus apparently shrugging off the violence. Other leading Congress Party politicians have been charged with abetting the riots. And, as in the case of Gujarat, justice has been slow. Nine commissions have looked into the evidence, and the latest, released in August 2005, has not satisfied many people. (It finds credible evidence against some low-ranking Congress officials but exonerates the higher-ups.)[12]

There were also differences: the Delhi riots remained localized and lasted a far shorter time than the Gujarat riots, since law enforcement

eventually did its job. Rape and killing-by-incineration were not central elements of the violence. And the assassination did grow directly out of an organized violent uprising of Sikhs in the Punjab that posed an ongoing threat to the nation's security. Finally, and most important, the anti-Sikh riots were not an outgrowth of years of careful dissemination of hatred, nor did they express an ethos of ethnoreligious supremacy. They were revenge, pure and simple. The Congress Party, culpable though it was, did not have an ethnic-cleansing agenda.

None of these factors justifies what happened. The anti-Sikh riots were a terrible crime, and the Congress Party government is to be blamed severely for not stopping them sooner and protecting Sikh lives. It is not surprising that Manmohan Singh, a Sikh and the first member of a minority religion ever to be prime minister of India, coupled the anti-Sikh riots with Gujarat in his first speech as prime minister, saying of both: "We as a nation must have a firm determination that these things should never happen."[13]

Why Gujarat?

The events of March 2002 emerged from a long and deliberate construction of hate. And yet there remain unanswered questions. Hindu-Muslim animosity (and also animosity against Christians) has long been fomented by the Hindu right in many parts of India. Riots have taken place from time to time since Partition in 1947. Gujarat itself has had riots in the past, but its history in that respect is not unique. Why did this unprecedented violence erupt in Gujarat? Indians have anxiously asked themselves whether Gujarat is a sign of what the future holds in store for the rest of the nation. Is Gujarat really typical, or are there special factors there that might not exist in other states? And is there anything to be learned from the special features of this state about what makes violence likely to break out?

Gujarat was part of the Moghul empire; it knew the destruction of sacred Hindu shrines by Muslims. In this respect, however, it is like most of northern and western India. More recently, during Partition, it did not experience more bloodshed than other states, even though it borders Pakistan at some points; the most shocking carnage

at that time took place farther north. Since independence, however, there have been some significant differences that may help to explain why the politics of the Hindu right has acquired such a strong grip here.[14]

The fact that Gujarat is a border state with Pakistan remains a significant factor in people's minds, since they easily equate Muslims with Pakistan. In addition, Muslims in Gujarat are occupationally somewhat different from Muslims in the rest of the nation: traditionally merchants and traders, they are at least somewhat more likely to be educated, urbanized, and, in many cases, relatively well off. Muslims in most of India are generally a poor and oppressed minority, and that is true of many of Gujarat's Muslims. But there is also a sense that Muslims are taking positions in society that Hindus might hold. Their role as moneylenders helps explain the animosity of tribal people and lower-caste Hindus. Rather like the Jews in Europe in the 1930s, they are convenient objects of envy and resentment among poor and unemployed Hindus.

Then, too, Gujarat's leaders have focused on attracting foreign investment and industry, without much attention to other "quality of life" issues. The state ranks very high in industrialization, urbanization, and per capita income, but low on "human development" indicators such as education, maternal mortality, underemployment, and persecution of caste-based minorities. So there are large discontents, and great poverty, especially in rural areas. At the same time, Gujarat has never had a strong organized labor movement. Although Gandhi for a time helped to organize labor in Gujarat in the textile industry, he did not come often to the state after his national career began, and the union movement has ended up being considerably weaker there than in many other states. As a result, impoverished and frustrated workers have increasingly turned to religion-based politics to vent their frustration.[15] The Hindu right has organized very effectively at the grassroots level, filling the void left by politicians and labor leaders. This is a story familiar to Americans, who are often surprised to see people in poorer rural regions of the Midwest or the South vote for politicians who share their religious values but whose policies run counter to their economic interests. This tendency proved unstable, since the BJP experienced substantial losses in the rural areas of Gujarat in the May 2004 elections.

To the role played, or rather not played, by class in Gujarat's political organization we may add the politically influential role of the Patels, a caste-based middle-class group who are enormously influential in the state, and who early on turned to the BJP to enhance their political power. Because of the huge political power of leader Sardar Patel, a very conservative man, Nehru never had much influence in Gujarat, and even the local Congress Party often opposed Nehru's policies. This factor encouraged the Hindu right to organize very early in Gujarat. Legal scholar Girish Patel reports:

> I still remember going to a local *shakha* [branch, a youth group of the Hindu right] when I was eight or nine in . . . Ahmedabad. They drew young people in through innocuous exercise programs, so-called non-political stunts; culturally, every day there is a *shakha* meeting, exercises, morning prayers, some anti-Muslim indoctrination, and their version of history. Fortunately, either accidentally or genetically I never got attracted to this. Right from the beginning, RSS found a fertile place in Gujarat because of the overall political situation.[16]

Patels are historically farmers, and thus would have a low place in the traditional caste hierarchy. Over the years they have therefore increasingly turned to the nontraditional Swaminarayan sect, founded by Sahajanand Swami, which by now has become enormously wealthy and influential both in Gujarat and abroad. Its temple in Gujarat is a stunning sight, glorious in the midst of poverty. The sect also has large and increasing influence in the United States, with opulent temples in Boston, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston. Despite its peaceful ideology, it has become a locus for right-wing politics and sectarian community organization.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the contention that certain educational approaches have played a role in making Gujarat different. Rote learning is a problem in most of public education in India; nowhere is critical thinking given the robust development that early Indian progressive educators such as Rabindranath Tagore rightly urged. But it is clear that the Gujarati system relies even more than others on rote repetition—its textbooks have been notorious for their failure to encourage critical thinking—while a focus on technical training promotes the

state's probusiness agenda. (Gujarat has outstanding schools of management and rural management.) Girish Patel writes of a general movement in Gujarati schools "from liberal and critical education to training and mechanical education, forsaking the real nature of education, which is 'human awakening, not animal training.'"[17] In such circumstances it was easy for the politically powerful Hindu right to insert its own view of the nation and of religious issues into required textbooks.[18] Admiring references to Hitler and his "achievements" in the social science textbooks have repeatedly been criticized, to no effect.

Gujarat, then, is in some ways different, but in ways that are subtle and not dramatic. Factors there that supported the outbreak of violence—the lack of political organization along class and economic lines, the absence of critical thinking in the schools, and the effective grassroots organization throughout the state by the Hindu right—are replicated in many states, in differing degrees. Difference is no source of comfort.

Reactions and Aftermath

The mass killings and rapes of innocent Muslims were aided and abetted by the police. The main tactic used by BJP politicians in response to the events was to deploy a logic of action and reaction: yes, these things are tragic, but what do you expect? Once someone starts it, things take their inevitable course. During the events Narendra Modi, the BJP chief minister of Gujarat, stated: "What is happening is a chain of action and reaction." He then elaborated: "It is natural that what happened in Godhra day before yesterday, where forty women and children were burnt alive, has shocked the country and the world. The people in that part of Godhra have had criminal tendencies. Earlier, these people had murdered women teachers. And now they have done this terrible crime for which a reaction is going on." Modi's statements not only justified the violence as a response to an alleged long history of "criminal tendencies"; they also portrayed it as inevitable and unstoppable, more like a natural cataclysm than a set of blameworthy human acts. Local VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad, the cultural organization of the Hindu right) leader Ashok Singhal took this "Newtonian logic," as it was called in the press, one step further: the rioting was "a matter of pride," "a befitting reply to what has been perpetrated on the Hindus in the last thousand years. Gujarat has shown the way, and our journey of victory will begin and end on the same path."[19] Other VHP leaders proclaimed victory in a similar way, echoing the language of Hindu-right hate pamphlets.

One of the most outspoken of these leaders, and a major political force at the national level, is VHP general secretary Praveen Togadia. Togadia is fond of inflammatory rhetoric, but even so, his remarks were chilling. He spoke of Gujarat as an "experiment," and said, "We will make a laboratory of the whole country. This is our promise and our resolve. If madrasas, the jihadi laboratory, are allowed to educate to kill non-Muslims, why can't we have our own laboratory? . . . Gujarat has become the graveyard of secular ideology."[20] Togadia's reference to the education in how to kill non-Muslims that Muslim schools allegedly provide made the meaning of "our own laboratory" chillingly clear. Several days later he compared the opponents of Hindutva (Hindu-right) philosophy to cancer patients living under a death sentence, which would be carried out by the people.[21]

Since the events in Godhra, more and more evidence has surfaced about Chief Minister Modi's involvement in the failure to restore law and order. Most damaging is the testimony of his own chief of police.[22] As early as July 15, 2002, an affidavit from Director-General of Police R. B. Sreekumar, who headed intelligence from April 9 to September 17, 2002, contradicted Modi's claim that he was unaware of the large number of *kar sevaks* returning from Ayodhya. On August 31, 2004, Sreekumar said that the police force had been pressured by political leaders into not registering riot offenses and going easy on those accused. In April 2005 he released his diary of the relevant period to the press, and it contains material extremely damaging to Modi. For example, on May 7, 2002, Sreekumar was summoned by Modi to report on the continuing violence. He referred Modi to his own previous analysis of April 22, according to which the government needed to take strong action to arrest "those Hindu leaders involved in the heinous crimes committed during the recent communal riots" and to restore the confidence of Muslims in the state administration. At that time he had been told that "such action is not possible immediately, as it is against

the State Government policy." On May 7 Modi responded personally, telling Sreekumar that "I had drawn the wrong conclusion bas[ed] on partial data and defective presumptions. In Modi's view the violence unleashed by the Hindu mob after Godhra incident . . . was a natural, uncontrollable reaction, and no police force can control or contain the same." Sreekumar argued that "such an excuse cannot be taken by authorities, particularly [the] police department, which is bound by law to maintain public order." Modi did not respond, but "asked me to concentrate on Muslim militants . . . [He] instructed that I should not concentrate on Sangh Parivar [the Hindu right], as they are not doing anything illegal." On June 28, with reference to Modi's upcoming political campaign, he was told by Modi's second in command that it was Modi's "policy and well-considered decision" that if anyone was "trying to disturb" the campaign "that PERSON BE ELIMINATED." When Sreekumar responded "that such a totally illegal action cannot be taken on legal unethical grounds," he was told that "such an action can be taken on the basis of SITUATIONAL LOGIC." Sreekumar responded "that [the] police is a creature of law, and it cannot take any action which is not legally justified." The diary contains much more of this incriminating evidence against the political authorities.

The BJP politicians at the national level followed a similar rhetorical strategy, with a little more indirection. Although some BJP leaders, as well as the opposition, called for Modi's forced resignation (something that is within the power of the national party), other influential leaders defended his conduct. Among the most ardent defenders was Arun Jaitley, minister of law, who was briefly removed from his post only to be reinstated. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who is usually considered a moderate, and the "decent" face of the Hindu right, revealed another side in a speech given to a party congress at Goa on March 3, 2002, in which he said:

> What happened in Gujarat? If a conspiracy had not been hatched to burn alive the innocent passengers of the Sabarmati Express, then the subsequent tragedy in Gujarat could have been averted. But this did not happen. People were torched alive. Who were those culprits? The government is investigating into [*sic*] this. Intelligence agencies are collecting all the information. But we should not forget how the tragedy of Gujarat started. The subsequent developments were no doubt condemnable, but who lit the fire? How did the fire spread? . . . Wherever Muslims live, they don't like to live in co-existence with others, they don't like to mingle with others; and instead of propagating their ideas in a peaceful manner, they want to spread their faith by resorting to terror and threats. The world has become alert to this danger.[23]

Although other parts of Vajpayee's speech appear to defend the concept of a pluralistic, tolerant India, the segments quoted above adopt Modi's logic of action and reaction and fail to condemn either the actions of the perpetrators or the inaction of the police. Vajpayee can perhaps be forgiven for assuming at the time that the Godhra incident was caused by Muslims and was the result of a "conspiracy," although to convict without evidence or trial is not exactly just in a democracy based on the rule of law. What is unforgivable is his general insistence that the wholesale killing of thousands of innocent people can be condoned as a response to the incident. In addition to condoning mass murder, his speech repeats standard propaganda against Muslims—that they are terrorists, that they cannot be peaceful democratic citizens—that the Hindu right has long worked to disseminate.

Arun Shourie, who was minister of information at the time, told me that Vajpayee initially "certainly felt very strongly that Mr. Narendra Modi should resign."[24] Shourie was returning with the prime minister from a trip to Southeast Asia. Before the ministers landed in Goa there were intense discussions about the situation in Godhra among Vajpayee, L. K. Advani (the second in command in the BJP), Jaswant Singh (the foreign minister), and Shourie. The four decided that upon landing in Goa "Mr. Advani would ring up Mr. Modi and ask him to offer his resignation in the evening, which he [Advani] did." Others in the BJP opposed this decision, and no clear resolution had been reached before the meeting in Goa. Shourie says that Vajpayee ultimately made the statement about Muslims not in order to support Modi but rather in response to his discussions with political leaders in Southeast Asia, who were intensely concerned about the threat of Muslim terrorism and had asked him to use the occasion of the party congress to speak out against it. Shourie credits the prime minister's turnaround in part to his own advice. When Vajpayee turned to him as an

expert on Islam,[25] he conveyed to the prime minister the danger posed by Muslim proselytizing in spreading support for terrorist activities. Certainly Shourie's narrative makes sense of the rhetoric of the Goa speech, whose very general claims about Islam and its role in the world seem not directly relevant to the Gujarat incident.

If what Vajpayee really intended was to deliver a strong message that India would not tolerate the spread of terrorism in Asia, he surely used bad judgment when he linked these remarks to general observations about Indian Muslims as citizens, and even worse judgment when he connected those remarks to the mass murder of innocent civilians in Gujarat, as if the existence of terrorists somewhere in the world somehow excused those criminal actions. But Vajpayee is a shrewd politician, and he was speaking at a gathering of his own party, not addressing foreign leaders. There is every reason to think that the rhetoric of his speech was artfully constructed to link the well-known idea of Muslim terrorism to the alleged conspiracy in Gujarat. The idea of an international Muslim conspiracy against democracy is a very effective way for the BJP to attract support, portraying itself as both strong (against terrorism) and law-abiding. Such rhetoric both deflects attention from the lawlessness of Hindus in Gujarat and stirs up fear, making people think that Muslims indeed cannot be peaceful neighbors or fellow citizens. By the use of the word "conspiracy" he suggested that the killings thwarted an organized danger that might have cost thousands of innocent lives. Vajpayee's rhetoric also appeared to position India alongside the United States, reminding people of the real terrorist acts of 9/11/2001, and suggesting to the international business community that the BJP has values very much in line with their own (rather than the values involved in ethnic cleansing, which could be, and were subsequently, a definite deterrent to foreign investment).

As for the local Gujarati Congress Party, although its leaders condemned the events, they did not do so very strongly. In the subsequent election campaign in Gujarat, they chose a course of moderate Hinduization, trying to capture votes by moving to what they perceived as the center (a familiar tactic), rather than utterly rejecting the Hindu nationalist program and defending pluralism and equal rights. They thus lost moral credibility, even while they also lost the election.

Although the Gujarati press (apart from the one Muslim newspaper) systematically concealed the real nature of the events, most of the national press covered events admirably and dissected the statements of leading politicians with appropriate skepticism. The national Electoral Commission also acted responsibly, postponing new elections until the rule of law could be reestablished and at least some of the Muslims who had fled for their lives were able to return home. (In many cases they had neither homes nor jobs to return to. The state government was very quick to build roads, temples, and Hindu business establishments over the ruins of Muslim homes. Relief and reconstruction remain almost nonexistent.) Both the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court have since played a strong part in the search for justice for the victims.

Particularly encouraging was the tremendous demonstration of activism and concern from many parts of the community: scholars, nongovernmental organizations, lawyers and judges, students. Several investigative groups did heroic work, going to the refugee camps to take down the data. A Muslim women's organization headed by Syeda Hameed—now a member of the Planning Commission under the Congress government—was one of the first, and did crucial evidentiary work interviewing women who had been raped and maimed. Other nongovernmental organizations followed suit. Scholars joined with such groups, giving up their own work and taking on, in effect, the functions that government was failing to perform: recording complaints, helping the survivors.

The enormous outpouring of analysis by independent journalists and scholars is extremely heartening to an American, accustomed to the relative silence of academics in the face of national catastrophe. Equally heartening is the fact that their writings quickly found publication in national news media, in magazines from the highly popular *(Frontline)* to the somewhat more literary *(The Little Magazine)*[26] and politically sophisticated *(Economic and Political Weekly, Seminar, Communalism Combat)*—and, later, in anthologies put together to disseminate the most important materials.[27] The Internet also proved very important in disseminating information; several significant investigative and analytical reports can be found online.

Dozens of young people, students and young scholars and activists, converged on Gujarat. A political science student from Jawaharlal

Nehru University in Delhi said that it was very important to Hindu students to go there and do work, as a type of penance for a collective Hindu guilt: she and others thought in terms of the Hindu concept of *praysaschit*, or atonement.[28] It may be that not all the visitors helped the situation: there is a limit to the amount of interviewing a survivor of rape can stand, and leading activist Teesta Setalvad felt that too many groups ignored the issue of trauma, just in order to do good themselves; she described the phenomenon as almost a kind of "riot tourism." However, she noted that Delhi University students did useful hospital work in the refugee camps.[29]

Especially important was the report of the independent Concerned Citizens' Tribunal, organized by Teesta Setalvad and chaired by former chief justice Krishna Iyer, one of the most distinguished jurists in India's history.[30] This commission, which included lawyers, judges, and academics (for example Tanika Sarkar), produced as complete a record of the events as we are ever likely to get, collecting 2,094 oral and written testimonials, interviewing hundreds of witnesses, gathering pamphlets and other documents, and documenting a series of charges against culpable individuals. Now we know who should be charged with various offenses, even if it is unlikely that these charges will result in convictions.

In the course of its work, the commission found chinks in the BJP's armor. One leading minister testified at length under condition of anonymity. Numerous prominent Hindus from Gujarat came forward to deplore the events and to give what information they could. Mr. Piyush Desai, the chief executive officer of the Gujarat Tea Processors and Packers Limited, which produces the popular Wagh Bakri brand of tea, and chair of the All India Tea Federation, mentioned that his business had been started 110 years before through the help of a Muslim who gave his grandfather a large loan. He spoke eloquently of the history of harmony and cooperation between the religions in Gujarat, deplored the crimes, and said of the help he had received from Muslims, "However can we repay such a debt?" The commissioners comment: "This witness was a fresh and welcome ray of hope for the Tribunal." He paid for tea for all the refugee camps out of his own pocket, "along with paper cups that are hygienic."

In December 2002, however, Modi won reelection by a landslide,

playing the cards of hate and fear. Hindu-right leaders proclaimed that the Gujarat "experiment" had succeeded: the campaign of hate would henceforth spread all over India. Muslim businesses in many areas of Gujarat have been taken over by Hindus, so the condition of Muslims in the state is worse than ever. The continuing economic boycott of Muslim businesses deprives even those who remain of much of their livelihood. Indiscriminate arrests of Muslims continue, often under the screen of the national Prevention of Terrorism Act, a favorite BJP piece of legislation, with some key similarities to America's Patriot Act.

The first discernible ray of hope was that the BJP, trying to use the same hate politics in other state elections that year, did not prevail. Finally, in May 2004, it was turned out of office by the voters. Gujarat was only one issue; economic issues were probably more decisive. But throughout the campaign the Congress Party insisted that India must remain a pluralistic nation in which all citizens are equal under the laws. Both party leader Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are clearly deeply committed to that idea. So the implications of the Gujarat carnage for national politics are as yet unclear, and one may still feel hope for the future of multireligious democracy in India.

Securing Justice: What Really Happened at Godhra

For a long time most people assumed that the terrible incident at Godhra was indeed fomented by the Muslim mob that had thrown objects at the train. Although the conspiracy theory linking the attack to Pakistan and even to Al Qaeda was not widely believed, it was natural to follow the logic of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc:* the incineration of the car immediately followed the face-off between the *kar sevaks* in the train and the Muslims outside the train, so it must be somehow the result of those events. The crucial forensic evidence was not examined for a long time, and it is likely that some of it is lost forever. For example, a piece of canvas from the vestibule connecting coach S-6 to coach S-7 had been removed by the time the official Nanavati-Shah judicial inquiry commission inspected the coach on July 15, 2002. The canvas is important because the police theory of the crime is that the "conspirators" ripped open the vestibule between the two coaches, kicked open the door of

coach S-6, and then poured at least 60 liters of gasoline onto the floor and jumped out of the back door.[31] They allegedly ignited the fire by throwing burning rags into the coach through the broken windows. But if the vestibule was indeed forcibly ripped open, the canvas would itself be ripped. Instead the inspectors found a new piece of canvas that had clearly just been put into the vestibule. Questions have been raised about how such an important piece of evidence managed to get lost.

Three inquiries into the forensics of the incident have taken place. One, an official state government judicial inquiry headed by G. T. Nanavati and K. G. Shah, is still in progress. According to participants, the commissioners have been very thorough in taking testimony from people with all viewpoints, though it remains to be seen whether their analysis will be equally impartial. A second inquiry was conducted under the auspices of the new Congress Party government and its railways minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav, but chaired by a respected justice of the Supreme Court, U. C. Banerjee. It delivered its results in January 2005. An independent panel of engineers also investigated the events, submitting its results in January 2005. Both the Banerjee Commission and the independent engineers' commission have found that the police theory does not fit the forensic evidence: the fire could not have started "on the floor of the passage or the floor outside the toilets by throwing of flammable liquid."[32] The whole disaster, both reports conclude, was probably a tragic accident.

Both commissions advanced several arguments against the police theory. First of all, it seems prima facie unlikely that *kar sevaks* armed with sticks would simply allow a miscreant to climb into the carriage and pour flammable liquid around. Second, the doors between the coaches cannot be kicked open, as alleged in the police theory. Third, the forensic laboratory's re-creation of the incident verified that it was impossible to set fire to the train from outside. Fourth, the pattern of burns on the victims was the opposite of what the police theory would predict: victims were not burned from below, but instead were able to crawl beneath the flames to safety, and showed burns only on the upper parts of their bodies. So the flames seem to have come down from above. Fifth, the "possibility of an inflammable liquid having been used is completely ruled out, as there was first a smell of burning, followed by dense smoke and flames thereafter. This sequence is not possible when the fire is caused by an inflammable liquid thrown on the floor of the coach or an inflammable object thrown from outside the coach."[33]

So what did happen? First we need to ask why the train, which had already stopped because the passengers pulled the cord to let their fellow *kar sevaks* back on the train, stopped a second time at all. Possibly someone pulled the cord again. But the more likely reason is that the vacuum locks were not adequately reset in all four places where the cord was pulled: one lock remained not reset, and so the train, having slowly clunked along for a bit, shortly came to a halt of its own accord. Then the stone-throwing match began. At this point the Hindus in the train very likely closed the windows to prevent objects from coming in. Concerning what happened next, much obscurity reigns, but comparisons with other train incidents, particularly with a tragic accident near Delhi in November 2003, suggest that fire originated beneath the seats of the car, from cooking stoves stored there by passengers. The burning of the seats and lower berth of the sleeping car produced a dense smoke. (Alternately, it is suggested that the burning ignited the rubber around the doors.) Somehow or other a dense buildup of smoke occurred, and, the engineers argue, "The resultant dense and high temperature smoke spread to the top of the carriage and then moved along the ceiling and the roof through the length of the coach. The radiative and convective heat generated eventually resulted in a flash over which the fire engulfed the entire coach towards the top."[34] However the smoke initially accumulated, the "flash-over" phenomenon is by far the most likely explanation for the patterns of burning on the victims. And of course the accumulation of gases was possible because the passengers had closed the windows. The fact that objects were being thrown at the train did contribute to the disaster, but in a much more indirect way than was alleged by the police. If the Muslims who threw objects bear some contributory moral culpability for the incident, so too do the railways for permitting overcrowding in the coaches and the presence of flammable liquids (kerosene stoves) in the passengers' luggage. Remember that S-6 held approximately double the number of passengers who had reserved seats, a situation that should not have been tolerated by any railway system but that happens every day in India. On

this account, Muslims bear no legal culpability, and the onus of blame lies with the Railways Board, which has a legal obligation to maintain the trains in a safe condition.

Investigation into Godhra will never produce a universal public consensus about what really happened. One factor on which everyone must agree, however, is the deforming power of ideology in skewing the search for truth. If the story that Muslims caused the fire was prima facie plausible, so, too, to anyone who has ever ridden in any kind of bus or train in India, was the possibility of negligence and accident. Corruption and negligence are endemic in the transportation system, along with sheer lack of funds to make essential services work. Only two years before Gujarat, the Railways Board was found culpable in a horrendous instance of gang rape that took place in Howrah Station, Kolkata, when a female passenger from Bangladesh, falling sick, was duped by railway employees into entering the railway hotel, which she thought a safe place to lie down, and then was raped by a large number of railway employees, a case that was called a crime against humanity by the Indian Supreme Court. The Court awarded her damages against the Railways Board for the conduct of its employees and its failure to maintain its hotel as a safe public accommodation.[35] The laxness of the railways in enforcing minimal standards of decent conduct among employees and of safety in the trains is notorious.

Both theories of the crime should have been dispassionately investigated. They were not, because a panic against Muslims had been successfully spread by political forces. Now that the investigation has been completed by two independent groups, the overwhelmingly more likely story is that negligence and accident were the primary causes.

Securing Justice: The Best Bakery and the Yorkshire Tourists

It has proven very difficult to secure justice for the victims of Gujarat. So many witnesses to the crimes were themselves killed; so many delays occurred in the registering of complaints and the taking down of evidence; so many victims had lost their homes and moved away from the area. Added to these difficulties was the widespread use of fire, which destroyed most of the forensic evidence that might have been gathered

from the bodies of the victims. Nonetheless, several cases that did involve survivors seemed promising enough to take to court. Particularly notorious was the "Best Bakery" case, in which a Muslim family witnessed the incineration of their place of business and the killings of some twenty people in Vadodara on March 1, 2002. Fourteen people were killed, including the father of the family who owned the business and helpless women and children. The surviving family members were able to identify their attackers, so the case seemed particularly promising. Twenty-one accused were arrested and brought to trial. During the trial, however, the primary witness, Zahira Sheikh, who had lost her father and other family members, recanted her original story, as did another forty-four of seventy-one witnesses. The accused were acquitted on June 27, 2003. The public prosecutor took no steps to protect the witnesses or to investigate the possibility of witness tampering, despite the fact that a large number of people had changed their story. He also rejected requests by witnesses that their testimony be heard *in camera*. In early July Zahira appeared before the National Human Rights Commission, charging that she had been threatened by powerful politicians not to give evidence against the accused. The state then appealed against the acquittals, in a presentation later described by the Supreme Court as "not up to the mark and neither in conformity with the required care." The Gujarat High Court rejected the appeal, and the acquittals stood. In the process the high court labeled Zahira a tool of special interests and other witnesses as "of unsound mind," in both cases (as the Supreme Court later held) "without any material or reasonable and concrete basis to support such conclusions." The Supreme Court's appointed representative at the trial called the high court decision "a shame on the system."[36]

In January 2004 India's Supreme Court accepted a petition from Zahira Sheikh for a change of venue in the case. On April 12 it delivered a judgment full of indignation at the poor quality of investigation, witness protection, and legal argument in the case at both the trial-court and appellate levels. Citing Jeremy Bentham's statement that witnesses are "the eyes and ears of justice," the Court argued that if the state allows interference with witnesses, "the trial gets putrefied and paralised, and it no longer can constitute a fair trial." In this case, "If one even cursorily glances through the records of the case, one gets a

feeling that the justice delivery system was being taken for a ride and literally allowed to be abused, misused and mutilated by subterfuge." The Court then vacated the acquittals, ordered a new trial in the adjacent state of Maharashtra, and ordered the state of Gujarat to reimburse Maharashtra for all the expenses involved.

Zahira Sheikh herself moved to Maharashtra and was living under the protection of a legal nongovernmental organization, Communalism Combat, which had been helping her in her legal efforts. The moving spirit of this organization, Teesta Setalvad, also a journalist and editor of the journal *Communalism Combat,* was the convener of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal, which took down much of the evidence from witnesses after the massacre.

Setalvad has been much lauded for her work in the case and has won numerous awards both in India and abroad, including the Nuremberg International Human Rights Award. She has also, more recently, been the target of accusations of bribery and kidnapping. I interviewed Setalvad on June 20, 2004, before the accusations were made against her but after her success in securing a change of venue for the trial. Outside a modest Mumbai (Bombay) bungalow, children were playing cricket and soccer. At the gate stood security guards, a necessity since the prosecution began because of threats against Setalvad and her family. Visitors' bags are carefully searched, and all must sign a book and show photo identification. Setalvad said that one of the most difficult aspects of her public role has been to try to preserve a normal atmosphere for her two children, ages eight and thirteen. A small dark woman in her late thirties, Setalvad was wearing faded black jeans and seemed very tired. Her hair was oily and matted in the heat, and she had dark circles under her eyes. She spoke very rapidly, with nervous mannerisms that indicated considerable stress.

Setalvad's involvement with religious violence in Gujarat began a long time ago. In the 1980s she had already studied the issue, and in the 1990s she and her husband, liberal Muslim activist Javed Anand (cofounder of the organization Muslims for Secular Democracy), founded the journal *Communalism Combat,* which in 1995 published a study of the religious skewing of textbooks in Gujarat. Because of her long-term record on these issues, when the riots began people started calling her, several hundred phone calls in a few days. Local

groups in Gujarat appear to have been paralyzed or to have lacked meaningful connections with people. Within two days Setalvad went to Gujarat and began taking down testimony, thinking at this point simply of preserving the record, not about what would stand up in court. She formed the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal, and its other members came to help take down the evidence. With a few exceptions, the police were doing nothing. She also saw evidence of preplanning, particularly the use of chemicals like lye to destroy forensic evidence.

As for the Best Bakery case, she had met the witnesses several times, and knew that something was wrong when they began to retract their statements. So she got involved, hearing from Zahira and her family about the threats they had received. She provided protection for Zahira in Mumbai and prevailed on the Supreme Court to order the change of venue. Setalvad believes that the Supreme Court was influenced by the extensive and high-quality press coverage of the riots and of the Best Bakery case itself. I asked her if she was optimistic. "I would not exactly say optimistic," she replied. "I mean one has to believe that things can change if one is to go on working, so I can do my little bit from day to day."

When I asked Setalvad whether there was anything else that she would like Americans to know, she surprised me by launching into a detailed account of the destruction, during the riots, of 270 religious and cultural shrines, all demonstrative of the tremendous pluralism and syncretism that has always, she said, characterized culture and religion in Gujarat, and in India generally. The lines of fatigue began to fade, and her face took on new animation. "I have a passion for history," she said, and talked with evident pleasure about the deep intermingling of Hindu and Muslim cultures, the gross distortion of history when one focuses only on the Muslim invasions. The first convert to Islam in India, she said, was a wealthy ruler in Kerala who believed that Islam was a more egalitarian religion. "But they don't talk about that. They only talk about the invasions." Gujarat was a particular site of cultural fusion because of its accessibility via the Arabian Sea. Clearly, Setalvad found solace in thinking about a happier era of cooperation and pluralism.

As Setalvad showed us out, her eight-year-old son was kicking a soccer ball. "He's a great fan," she said, smiling.

In August 2004 the retrial began in Mumbai. There were hitches:

only fourteen of the twenty-one accused could be found and arrested; by September only one more had been located. Key documents had to be translated from Gujarati to Marathi. But things began well, as some of the witnesses identified their attackers, confirming their statements earlier in the case. On November 3, however, Zahira Sheikh retracted her statement, saying that she had been forced by Teesta Setalvad to make a false accusation "and even threatened with dire consequences if she had not cooperated." She added: "Teesta used to get me to sign documents written in English. She never explained these to me even when I asked her." Later, in a letter of complaint to the National Commission for Minorities, she added that she had been forcibly taken to Mumbai and kept in confinement there at Setalvad's behest. She suggested that she might file charges against Setalvad. Setalvad denied all the allegations and stated that all the affidavits written in English had been translated into Hindi for her to read them. Zahira then refused to obey a summons issued by the court. Meanwhile Narendra Modi seized the occasion to issue a call for a thorough public investigation of nongovernmental organizations.

The case continued in court. On November 16 Zahira's sister-in-law Yasmin identified eleven of the accused; she also mentioned threats against her own sister. On November 18 Zahira's younger brother Nasibullah turned against the prosecution, saying that he had lost consciousness during the attack after being hit from behind and had no memory of any of the events. This statement contradicted earlier statements made to the police in which he had identified the attackers. He alleged that one of Teesta Setalvad's aides had threatened him and his family. Prosecution lawyers were able to show contradictions between his earlier and later testimony, and they also produced evidence of cell-phone conversations between Nasibullah and BJP politician Madhur Srivastava, who had previously been named as the source of the threats against Zahira and members of his family. On November 25 Yasmin's testimony also fell apart, when she admitted that at one point she told Gujarat police that she had identified some of the accused wrongly for money. She denied that she had really faced any such pressure, and asserted that she had made her statement as a result of threats from the families of the accused. On December 1 Zahira's aunt said in court that the family had been offered bribes to retract their identifications at the

trial. On December 2 Zahira's sister Saira also retracted her earlier testimony, saying that there was so much smoke around that she could not see faces clearly. On December 15 Zahira's mother alleged in a deposition that Teesta Setalvad had threatened to kill her and eliminate her family.

New evidence surfaced on December 22, when Tehelka, an online investigative news service that has previously exposed corruption in high places, screened a film, made by secret camera, in which BJP member of Parliament Srivastava admitted that he had paid a large sum to Zahira to change her testimony in court.

The chaos continued as Zahira proceeded, in January 2005, to deny authorship of the affidavits that had been filed under her name, including the affidavit on the basis of which the change of venue was ordered. A large sum of money was found to have been deposited in her bank account. At this point the Supreme Court of India ordered a thorough inquiry into the contradictory statements by Zahira and Teesta, an inquiry that began in April 2005. Meanwhile Yasmin continued to stick by her story identifying the accused, and the Mumbai special court said that it would prosecute Zahira for perjury. Despite the change of venue, the local Gujarat police in Vadodhara registered a complaint against Setalvad on April 10, 2005, alleging that Zahira and her brother Nafitullah had been taken from their houses at knife-point by aides of Setalvad and taken to Mumbai, where they were kept in a hotel and threatened at gunpoint.

Ultimately the Supreme Court committee concluded that Zahira was lying. She was prosecuted for perjury and convicted. On March 29, 2006, she began serving a one-year prison sentence.

This sorry case demonstrates the terrible difficulty of winning a court case against organized crime, especially when organized crime wears the mantle of law and political authority. Even when the Supreme Court found that local justice in Gujarat was corrupt and shameful, those same local forces continued to influence events. Traditional remedies such as change of venue and witness protection, difficult enough when the target is a Mafia kingpin, prove woefully ineffectual when one is dealing with large families who need to continue to live and work in the original region, in the same community whose complicity in the crimes has already been established by the Supreme Court. When the

crucial witnesses are extremely poor, and dependent for their very survival on the good will of the community around them, there are additional reasons to think that justice will be compromised. Even now, though Setalvad has been vindicated, it is surely sad that the person going to jail is Zahira, herself a victim.

For these reasons, a different strategy was chosen by lawyer and activist Indira Jaising, who is seeking damages against Narendra Modi and several other top officials of the Gujarat state government. Jaising is a highbrow among legal activists, a lawyer of impeccable training and intellectual rigor who frequently argues before the Supreme Court and who has lectured all over the world, including visits in top American law schools. She is the founder of a legal organization, the Lawyers' Collective, that publishes a journal and focuses on issues of sex equality and HIV/AIDS. Jaising led the prosecution in two of India's most successful sex-equality cases, one of which won a landmark judgment for sexual harassment against a leading politician,[37] and one of which established that Muslim women may not receive less than Hindu women in maintenance after divorce. She commands the respect of politicians from both major parties. The opening speech at her conference on religious laws in December 2001 was given by Arun Jaitley, minister of law in the BJP-led government and one of the most hard-line of BJP ministers, with strong RSS credentials. He even left an emergency meeting of the Cabinet (discussing an attempted bomb attack on Parliament) to keep his commitment to Jaising. Despite the fact that her own political sympathies are not with the BJP, the party respects Jaising's work and is happy to be publicly associated with it, for whatever reason.

Jaising's prosecution, still in the initial hearing stage in the spring of 2006, focuses on a British citizen, Mohammed Salim Dawood, who suffered severe injuries and whose companions were murdered as a result of attacks on Muslims on February 28, 2002.[38] The charges allege that the crimes directly resulted from "acts of omission and commission" on the part of the Gujarati government officials named, including Modi, called in the brief "Defendant number 1." Dawood, with his two uncles and a friend, was returning from a tour of Rajasthan in a jeep. As they crossed the border into Gujarat they could see smoke, as if from buildings burning. Happening to pass a police car, they asked the officers whether it was safe to continue their journey. The officers said

that it was safe. Soon afterward they encountered a mob that had formed a roadblock. Their car stalled, and the mob dragged the driver from the vehicle. Dawood and his companions sought shelter at a neighboring farmhouse; an elderly woman washing clothes in front of the house refused to help them. People came out of the house and advanced toward them; meanwhile the original mob caught up to them, exclaiming that the tourists should be killed since they were Muslims. The tourists showed them their British passports and British currency to prove that they were foreign tourists and had no quarrel with the local mob. The mob then attacked them. Dawood tried to carry one of his uncles to safety. Only thirty minutes later did the police arrive. The driver was killed; two uncles were missing and never turned up; the uncle whom Dawood was carrying was taken with him to the hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Police investigation was sloppy and perfunctory.

The great advantage of Dawood's case is that he is safely back home in Yorkshire, where no pressure can be brought against him. Nor can it be credibly alleged that there was any motive for the crime other than religious hatred; and there is clear evidence that the crowd killed the men because they were Muslims. Moreover, the negligence of the police is amply demonstrated by their misleading statements to Dawood, their late arrival, and their sloppy investigation. In the context of this case, Jaising has been able to introduce the whole story of the climate in Gujarat that led to the riots, including the role of textbooks and public propaganda, and including the complicity of the higher-ups who are her real target. Nor does she need to rely on witness identification, always a shaky matter and particularly shaky during a riot. Dawood didn't know his attackers, as the Best Bakery family did, so his identifications would not have been especially strong evidence. Instead, damages are being sought higher up, against people whose complicit role in the background to the crimes is demonstrable.

Jaising might have brought a simple wrongful death action on Dawood's behalf. Instead she chose a more complicated legal strategy. Bringing a civil action for violation of fundamental rights, she has charged Modi and his henchmen with violation of the international Genocide Convention, ratified by India and thus part of what one ought to take into account in interpreting Article 21 of the Constitu-

tion's guarantee of the right to life.[39] (Precedent has established that ratified treaties are domestically binding and rightly enter into the interpretation of the domestic constitution.) Jaising argues that the state and its ministers were responsible for the breakdown of the constitutional machinery. Thus the claim is an "international human rights tort claim." She then makes an argument "that the nature of the crime is so gross that no government can be heard to say that we did not know that such a thing is crime." Modi will have to appear in court and defend his actions. He is expected to say that the violence was spontaneous and he could do nothing about it. But the Supreme Court judgment in the Best Bakery case will make this an unconvincing defense. The result for which Jaising aims is personal compensation to the victims by Modi.

Since the elections, Jaising observes, she and her staff have still felt the need to protect themselves against the possibility of violence, and they try not to go to court without a bodyguard; in some ways, however, her job has become easier. Witnesses are much more forthcoming, and she expects the new law minister to be supportive.

The search for justice continues.

Genocide, Law, and the International Community

How should concerned citizens of the world think about these terrible events?

Since genocide is a central category in international law and morality today, we must begin by stating the undisputed fact that in Gujarat there were mass killings and rapes on grounds of religion. Muslims were sought out not because of any imagined complicity in the precipitating event at Godhra, but simply because they were Muslims. Slogans shouted by the mob indicate that their intent was to assert Hindu superiority, to exterminate Muslims, and to destroy Muslim society: for example: "Jai Sri Ram! Kill, slaughter!" "Kill, slaughter! See what they did in Godhra. They killed our Hindus, so now kill them all, destroy their society"; "Finish off all Muslims; our people were not spared by them, don't have mercy." Much of the destruction of property happened in front of television cameras.

In light of these facts, it seems beyond dispute that the violence in Gujarat meets the definition of genocide offered in the United Nations Convention on Genocide:

> Article 2. In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measure intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Indeed, given the centrality of rape (usually followed by murder) in the events at Godhra, it seems clear that the intent to destroy the group is enacted in all the ways the Convention specifies—with the exception of the removal of children to another group, since children were murdered here along with their parents.

Moreover, the evidence of long-term and deliberate construction of hatred undermines any claim that these events were just the acts of a mob that got out of control. To this evidence we can add evidence of the (continuing) economic boycott aimed at eliminating Muslim livelihood.

India is a democracy committed to the rule of law. And yet the rule of law broke down in Gujarat. To most commentators on the events, their most profoundly disturbing feature was the complicity of officers of the law at all levels. The police were in most cases accomplices of crime. Modi and other government officials actively egged on the violence. The prime minister, as we have seen, utterly failed to show concern for the violation of the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. His law minister, Arun Jaitley, who ought to be the guardian of the rule of law, was one of the most vocal opponents of Modi's resignation. The national BJP government made no effort to conduct a serious investigation into the crimes and repeatedly refused calls for Modi's resignation, even after the electoral defeat of May 2004. Gujarat has been called a "blot" and a "blemish," but the killings have never been given the strong moral and legal condemnation they deserve.

In all these ways, Gujarat signals a fundamental breakdown of the rule of law. This is no mere situation of spontaneous rioting. It involves the infiltration and co-optation of the law itself by hate and fear. The very existence and meaning of India's pluralistic democracy are deeply compromised by these events, which show that some citizens can count on the law's coming to their aid and others cannot. The Concerned Citizens' Tribunal has offered a series of recommendations for trial and punishment of the main offenders, but there is no sign that these recommendations are being taken seriously by law enforcement in the state.

In her analysis of the Gujarat violence, historian Tanika Sarkar argues compellingly that these events reveal a probem in some fashionable ways of articulating the politics of difference, those that focus on the assertion of group identity and downplay or reject Enlightenment ideas of citizenship. Insofar as proponents of identity politics neglect the importance of traditional notions of citizenship, equality, and rights, she argues, they undercut "the only ground on which cultural difference can be sustained and asserted. We reject this truth as dated, as an old and therefore unusable brand in the marketplace of ideas, at our peril. The only opposite term to equal citizenship rights is unequal citizenship or the denial of citizenship. That is precisely what happened in Gujarat."[40]

People are sometimes willing to accept compromises in legal protections when national security is at stake. Vajpayee and other Hindu fundamentalist public actors repeatedly tried to link the Muslims who allegedly attacked the train both to Pakistan and to international terrorism. The current world atmosphere, and especially the indiscriminate use of the terrorism card by the United States, have made it easier for them to use this ploy. But there is no evidence that either of these links exists. Muslims in India are a highly diverse group, but it is obvious that one thing they have in common is that they did not go to Pakistan. One cannot always infer choice from such facts, but one certainly cannot infer Pakistani sympathies either, far less complicity in alleged Pakistani plots against India. As philosopher Pratap Mehta has written, the Indian Muslim community is perhaps the largest Muslim community in the world that has never produced either a massive fundamentalist movement or a rush to join terrorists.[41] Moreover, since Indian Muslims are for the most part poor (in considerable part because of the persistent discrimination they have encountered), the attempt to portray them as a dangerous social force sowing dissent from within is wildly unrealistic—even though in Gujarat such threats derive surface credibility from the relative prosperity of some Muslims.

Vajpayee, like some other political leaders around the world, readily uses the name Al Qaeda as a scare tactic in the absence of any evidence for making the connection. He did not even know how the train was set on fire, much less who did it, so *a fortiori* he could not know whether any of those involved had any sort of link with Al Qaeda. Given that the background to the train incident involved the stone-throwing incident near Godhra station, in which the crowd was reacting to stories of the alleged insults, assaults, and attempted abduction on the station platform, the more likely story, if one wanted to pin the incident on Muslims, is one of retaliation.

India faces no serious security threat from within that might have explained, let alone justified, restrictive measures against Muslims and a climate of fear and hostility toward them. The case of Kashmir is different; both terrorist groups and Pakistan are active there. But there is no reason to connect the Muslims of Godhra with Kashmir. Insofar as India does face a serious security threat from Pakistan, the victims in Gujarat are far more distant from the Muslims of Pakistan than most Japanese Americans were from the Japanese regime at the time of World War II. For one thing, fifty-five years had passed since Partition; for another, Indian Muslims are not immigrants at all, but native-born Indians.[42]

One thing about Gujarat that should hearten friends of democracy is the vigor and courage of the media at all levels. National newspapers and television, large-market and small-market magazines, work written by scholars for the general public, and even some of the local Gujarati media (newspapers in English and the Muslim newspaper) all leapt into the fray fearlessly, criticizing Modi and the state government and working hard to uncover the facts. Amartya Sen has long argued that the vigor of the free press in India has been a major feature contributing to the prevention of famine there, since news of disaster travels rapidly and creates political pressure to address the problem.[43] Sen's recent book *The Argumentative Indian* demonstrates the importance of pub-

lic debate in Indian traditions generally.[44] Gujarat shows a great failure of public debate at the state level, to the extent that the educational system, focused on rote learning, has undermined this key ingredient of a democratic political culture. The nation, however, responded vigorously and superbly. Rarely has there been such an outpouring of writing, or so much sacrifice of personal time and projects on the part of scholars and activists.

Public debate was not the only lack in Gujarati civil society. When people murder people who have been their neighbors for years, something has gone wrong at a deeper level. It had become possible to view Muslims not as full human beings, but as mere objects that should be moved out of the way or, worse still, as occasions for the gratification of a lust for power and revenge. How do people who see the members of their own group as fully human become capable of objectifying and stigmatizing others? The mob who cheered for the villain in the Bollywood movie lacked something beyond the capacity for critical reflection, something like the ability to imagine a human form as containing a human spirit. Such a collapse of the moral imagination has been described often in writing about the Holocaust.[45] In Gujarat it was epidemic, fueled by the political culture, but also supporting that culture. On the other side, however, we can see in the response of the nation a tremendous capacity for compassionate involvement, empathic understanding of suffering, and related action. It is perhaps not surprising that scholars who have long investigated ethnic violence should evince strong sympathy with the pain of Gujarati Muslims. More hopeful because more surprising was the response of so many people like Swaha Das and her fellow students, ordinary Hindu young people swept into the world of political action by a keen sense of the reality of others.

Concerned nations of the world should respond promptly and unequivocally to events like those that unfolded in Gujarat. Even when there is no reason to think that the events call for military intervention or even economic sanctions—and the existence of vigorous democratic processes in India suggests that these responses would not have been appropriate—condemnation of such outrages is the responsibility of all of us, and especially of our national leaders. The events in Gujarat, however, led to few large-scale public statements in the first years after

the massacre. The government of Finland did make a highly vocal protest at the time, and was denounced by the Vajpayee government for foreign interference. The U.S. State Department included an accurate summary of the events in its 2002 International Religious Freedom Report, but the administration did not make these events salient in its foreign policy; I cannot locate any major statement by a member of the present administration between 2002 and 2004 condemning the attacks. The Democrats were also silent—with the exception of former president Clinton, who in March 2003 issued a long statement for a conference sponsored by the journal ***India Today,*** in which he condemned the atrocities, saying that the events in Gujarat were among the saddest events since he left office. Clinton criticized the national government for its failure to stand against the politics of hate: "To identify and categorize people based on faith will keep India from becoming the right kind of giant in the twenty-first century." He added that efforts to rebuild Gujarat after the 2000 earthquake, for which he helped to raise funds, showed him that Hindus and Muslims can work together in the state.[46]

Clinton always took a particular interest in India, and he knows a great deal about it. What was surprising and disturbing was the silence of everyone else. The case seemed to call for heavy diplomatic pressure, given the complicity of government in the terrible events. Economic sanctions might at least have been debated. But no such issue was raised. Even allegations that some of the violence was funded with money from U.S. sources failed to prompt a congressional investigation.

Outside India, scholars who study that nation have contributed to the literature condemning the violence. Apart from this small group, however, the events attracted little attention in contrast to the amount of attention standardly given to events in the Middle East. Until 2005 there was no organized effort by American academics to express moral outrage by, for example, publishing petitions or advertisements condemning the carnage, organizing movements to seek economic sanctions against the state of Gujarat, or even divestiture of university stockholdings in businesses that operate heavily in the state. Whether these actions would be appropriate is unclear; but we should have been asking what actions *were* appropriate, and debating the alternatives.

The situation has recently improved—thanks in part to the efforts by journals such as *Dissent* and the *Boston Review* to keep debating these issues, and thanks in part to concerned activists and scholars who have tirelessly pursued contacts with the State Department. In May 2004 the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom found Modi to have been complicit in the Gujarat violence. In September 2004 the State Department's International Religious Freedom Report returned to the question of Gujarat, giving a detailed account of the derailment of the rule of law and tracing the violence to the ideology of Hindutva espoused by the BJP.

In February 2005 Narendra Modi was invited to Florida to address the Asian-American Hotel Owners Association. (This invitation gives a good idea of the surreal mixture of probusiness politics and violence that characterizes the BJP, especially in Gujarat.) He accepted. Anticipating that there might be some trouble, he applied for a diplomatic visa, although he already had a tourist visa. Meanwhile, resistance mobilized. Concerned academics signed a petition describing Modi's role in the violence and asking the State Department not to grant him a visa. U.S. Hindu groups also wrote letters of protest and planned demonstrations in various cities to coincide with his visit to Florida.

On March 15 Congressman John Conyers (Democrat from Michigan) submitted a House Resolution cosponsored by Congressman Joe Pitts (Republican from Pennsylvania) condemning the conduct of Modi in inciting religious persecution in Gujarat. The resolution referred to the condemnation in the U.S. State Department's Religious Freedom Report, to the admonition of Modi by the Indian Supreme Court for "complacency and actions in connection with the attacks on non-Hindu groups," and to the finding by India's National Human Rights Commission that there was "evidence of premeditation in the killings of non-Hindu groups, complicity by Gujarat State government officials, and police inaction in the midst of attacks on Muslims and Christians." Significantly, it also referred more generally to the role of Modi and his government in "promoting the attitudes of racial supremacy, racial hatred, and the legacy of Nazism through his government's support of school textbooks in which Nazism is glorified" and to the finding (by the U.S. State Department) that Modi revised high school textbooks to describe Hitler's "'charismatic personality' and the 'achievements' of Nazism."[47] Independently, Pitts wrote a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (cosigned by various others), asking the State Department to deny Modi a visa.

To almost everyone's surprise, on March 19 the State Department denied Modi a diplomatic visa and revoked his tourist visa.[48] The BJP reacted sharply, arguing that the denial was an "insult to the entire nation."[49] Modi himself called the denial an "insult to India and the Constitution." The government itself made a weak protest. But the leading newspapers seemed satisfied that justice had been done, and rights groups in India hailed the decision.[50] Kalim Kawaja, a leader of the U.S. Indian Muslim Council, said, "Frankly we did not expect such a move from the State Department. It was quite a surprise for us too. We welcome it and we are happy that the U.S. has taken a clear stand on the communal issue. This decision may not change many things. But it will evince discussion on the issue . . . this decision is good for India and the U.S."[51]

The outcome of the Modi case shows that there is by now a broad consensus that the Gujarat violence was a form of ethnic cleansing, that it was in many respects premeditated, and that it was carried out with the complicity of the state government and officers of the law.

2 The Human Face of the Hindu Right

As this world, that can be known through knowledge, is limited to us owing to our ignorance, so the world of personality, that can be realized by our own personal self, is also restricted by the limit of our sympathy and imagination. In the dim twilight of insensitiveness a large part of our world remains to us like a procession of nomadic shadows.

Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*

It is relatively easy for the moral imagination to put a human face on the suffering of Gujarat's victims. It is much more difficult to see the human face of the people who aided or condoned the violence. The Hindu right has many faces. Some of its spokespeople, like Pravin Togadia, openly call for violence and speak approvingly of ethnic cleansing. Togadia, however, is widely regarded as an extremist and something of an embarrassment, whether because of the content of his views or the openness with which he states them. More common is a complicated dance around the issue of violence, accompanied by blame of its Muslim victims.

It was not easy to gain access to leading figures of the right, particularly after the electoral defeat of May 2004, which caused such consternation in the party that some people who had scheduled interviews with me were no longer willing to meet or had left the country on extended vacations. Three people whom I did interview represent some of the diversity of the Hindu right; the fourth represents the choice to say no to religious violence.

The Zealot: K. K. Shastri

It is very hot in Ahmedabad in June, around 110 in the shade.[1] The monsoon is gathering, so the air is becoming heavier with moisture, but rain has not yet broken. Outside his attractive home surrounded by flowering shrubs, K. K. Shastri, president of the VHP in Gujarat, sits at a long writing table. During the interview a servant brings us tea, and two young men, evidently secretaries of some type, bring him messages and papers. Shastri, age ninety, is a respected scholar locally, and his role in the organization is at present more honorific than authoritative. But he is happy to speak for the organization and to describe its ideology.

Imagine seeing the almost-bald Gandhi, his skinny torso clad in his usual white loincloth, his kindly childlike face with deep laughing eyes that made strangers so quickly gravitate to him. Now imagine a similar figure but a different face: surprisingly lively dark eyes, hooded by folds of skin, with no humor, no warmth, but a piercing intensity. Picture this figure extending an arm across the table and touching the arm of my research assistant Mona Mehta, a slender young Hindu woman around five feet tall, very vulnerable-looking. He says to her, speaking suddenly in Gujarati, "My dear, I must give you a warning. These Muslims, they abduct young Hindu women. They take them away and do terrible things to them." I understand what is said only later, when Mona whispers a translation in my ear, but I see how the aged form is galvanized with excitement at the thought of Mona's danger and his own role as guardian of her purity.

Shastri is fond of explaining his racial and linguistic theories. In ancient times, he tells me, the time of the Vedas, Aryan culture existed in a pure form. It was so powerful that it spread all over the world, pulling into its orbit people from all the races. Even the Native American cultures of North America are descendants of Indian culture. "They are called Indians, and they are Indians." You can tell this, he says, from the fact that they wear a thread in their garments that is similar to the *janoi*, the sacred thread that Brahmins wear. At this point, Shastri takes out his own *janoi* tied diagonally around his body to show it to us. After spending two and a half months doing research on Native Ameri-

cans in the United States, Shastri published a book, *The First Colonist of America*, arguing that Native Americans speak a language descended from Sanskrit and migrated into the Americas from India through Alaska. He is emphatic that the issue is one of culture, not race: others can and do accept the superiority of Hindu culture, and then they become part of it.

In Hindu culture as Shastri reconstructs it, "there are no bloody quarrels," whereas "both Islam and Christianity are cruel . . . Indians are ever sympathetic, and they are not cruel." (Here Shastri uses "Indian" to mean "Hindu.") The most valuable aspects of Hindu culture are its nonviolence and "purity." Why, then, is there so much violence in Indian society, I ask. "Violence? It is the borrowed violence from Muslims. Christians are not so cruel." The VHP, by contrast, "works for the prosperity of the Hindu cult and the Hindu religion."

Shastri is obsessed by the danger that Muslims, above all, allegedly pose to Indian society. "They are totally dangerous. They feel there should not be anyone except Muslims." What about violence against the lower castes by upper-caste Hindus, a phenomenon much documented in many states? "All that is by Muslims," he asserts. Shastri hardly tries to convince me, because he assumes that as an American I will readily understand the dangerousness of Muslims and take his part. "Americans love Hindus and not Muslims," he says. Later in the month, interviewed by Mona alone, in Gujarati (easier for him than English), he returns to this theme: "If you read history you will see that Hindus have never behaved violently; it is the Muslims who do all the violence." And then, revealingly, "Muslims have become kings and emperors over here while we have remained slaves."

Shastri also has theories about the different ethnic groups in the United States. "Those people who have gone to America from Europe are peaceful. The first settlers who went to America killed and slaughtered the Indians, but afterwards the Germans, English, and other people who went were peaceful." Here he seems to be influenced by German race theory, which makes Spanish people less "Aryan" than the Germans and English: at any rate, he clearly equates peacefulness with Aryan identity and believes that northern Europeans have this identity.

In connection with the Gujarat violence, Shastri has earlier been quoted in the national press as saying that the VHP kept lists of names of Muslims that were used in the rioting. He now denies having made that statement and instead says that the violence "was all spontaneous." But if Hindus are nonviolent people, how did violence spontaneously break out? "Of course there will be violence. If I give you two slaps, would you tolerate me?" He adds, "The people who did this violence were from the lowest castes. There were no Brahmins or Baniyas indulging in the violence. It was mainly all the *bhils* [tribals] and *vaghris* [untouchables]." There is in fact widespread evidence that *dalits* and tribals joined in the rioting, but also that they were deliberately recruited. Through most of the interview Shastri, like most members of the Hindu right, insists on the inclusiveness of Hinduism, stressing that *dalits* and tribals can be full-fledged Hindus. He also claims that there were no castes before the introduction of toilets by Muslim rulers; only then did it become necessary to have people to clean them. Here his Brahmin caste consciousness becomes apparent, however.

So, I press, there was no plan for the violence at Godhra? "No. No. Nothing was planned." Police tried to control it, "but it was not possible to control, which is but natural." Are Muslims still a threat in Gujarat? "They are only putting on an act of peaceful coexistence, but internally they are still up to mischief."

How, then, can peace be brought to Indian society? "Peace is impossible while Muslims and Christians are around. They are not prepared to listen." What is the solution to the problem of Muslims not listening to Hindus? "The only solution is that Muslims should straighten up." How can they be straightened up? "We can't do it. A certain force will do it." What kind of force? "The government. These Muslims are in the business of spreading poison wherever they go. This is their main occupation all over the world, and they can only be taught a lesson through brute force."

Shastri then talks about the threat of demographic imbalance, given the alleged preference of Muslims for large families and their alleged aversion to birth control. Don't Hindus also have big families? "No. No. No. We are the biggest fools for killing unborn female fetuses. This is the biggest problem these days."

This farrago of amateur linguistics, prurient rape-fantasy, and progressive feminist concern about sex-selective abortion might be comical were it not for its paranoid and deeply serious heart, the hatred and

fear of Muslims (and to a lesser extent of Christians) that leads Shastri to think that the only way to peace is through preemptive violence. Picture these paranoid ideas—with their opposite side, an idyllic vision of a past era of Hindu purity and harmony—disseminated among young men, many of them uneducated and lacking access to alternative sources of information, in an atmosphere of solidarity, quasi-military drilling, and competitive games, and you will understand a lot about what happened in Gujarat.

The RSS Scholar: Devendra Swarup

On a bright sunny March day I visit an apartment complex on the outskirts of Delhi.[2] Clean, freshly painted, full of flowers, it is nonetheless very modest, almost Spartan in its white simplicity. Oddly, it reminds me of Finland's egalitarian housing developments, in which nobody has a very large or luxurious home and in which the whole radiates values of economy and equality. I climb a staircase and enter a shady small flat, full of books and papers but otherwise austerely furnished—no photographs or paintings on the walls, no carpets, only simple cane furniture. The flat consists of one small sitting room, a study that is little more than a cubicle, a tiny kitchen, and a bedroom. Although most of the books on the shelves have Hindi titles, the name Gandhi, written in huge black letters in English on the spine of one large volume, is visually prominent, as if to draw attention to Swarup's admiration for the leader whom the RSS at one time despised. I can't help wondering whether this eye-catching labeling is for my benefit. I am greeted by a short man in his seventies, solidly built but not overweight. He walks with difficulty and seems to have a bad hip, but he looks otherwise healthy. I see no sign of any servants, a most unusual phenomenon in Swarup's social class, and an indication of considerable self-denial.

Swarup, an in-house historian for the RSS rather than a scholar with a university appointment, lives here in retirement with his wife, a frail woman who later brings us tea and biscuits. Swarup's nephew, Suyash Agrawal, a former student of mine at the University of Chicago Law School, has persuaded Swarup to give me an interview. Throughout our meeting he treats me with great courtesy and speaks of his family with considerable warmth.

Swarup is well known as one of the intellectual leaders of the RSS. Among his numerous books are four recent volumes in Hindi that describe the organization's history and the sources of its strength. Both Vajpayee and Advani have praised these books as showing the world why all have reason to be proud of their associations with the RSS.[3] Before his retirement, Swarup was a leading voice in the Indian Council for Social Science Research; he was instrumental in securing the removal of its chair, M. L. Sondhi, who had denounced the council for turning a scholarly body into a forum for Hindutva propaganda.[4] He is, then, both a controversial political figure and a wily one, able to prevail against his opponents in a subtle political struggle. Not surprisingly, I saw here a modulated face of the Hindu right, carefully crafted for the public relations of the occasion.

The contrast between Shastri and Swarup is typical of the subtle differences that one often finds between the VHP and the RSS. The VHP has an intellectual aspect, but it is not very central; its members tend to be activists who rely on mob tactics. The RSS, by contrast, has a group of dedicated scholars and aspires to control scholarly institutions. Although both organizations have an ideology of self-denial and asceticism, the RSS supports spiritual values of loyalty, diligence, and self-denial. Whereas the VHP often openly asserts the acceptability of violence as a strategy (Togadia being one example), the RSS tends to express opposition to violence, except in retaliation.

Swarup and I talk about many aspects of Indian politics and constitutional history, but a focus on the danger posed by Muslims rapidly emerges. Like Shastri, he insists that Hindutva is not a race-based ideology but rather a cultural one, "rooted in patriotism, in spiritual value, and in character building," values that, in his view, must be transmitted through a participatory movement, because they can be learned only behaviorally and "through contact." The basic RSS idea, he says, is to live not for one's own group, but "for some higher group of humanity . . . for my nation, for mankind, and I'm ready to gradually sacrifice my personal and family interest for a bigger cause . . . This comes from an intense feeling of patriotism. In RSS methodology patriotism was the

key point . . . You see in this country there are so many languages, forms of worship, castes, the country is vast, so there is regional tradition also. So in all this diversity it is only intense patriotism for the land which can unite us." It is this sentiment of intense love for the land that is taught to young men in RSS groups.

Swarup emphasizes that unity ought to preserve diversity: "Homogeneity or uniformity is not a sign of evolution." But if unity must preserve diversity, what problem does he have with the role of Islam in Indian culture? Like Shastri, if with greater refinement, Swarup deals with this question by focusing on Muslims' alleged unwillingness to abandon their own religion and their interest in converting others. "The Islamic identity everywhere in the world is a disruptive and separatist ideology. You see that all over the world. I am not aware of any country where the Muslims have been able to live in peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims. Do you know of any country? You see, it is in-built in the Islamic ideology . . . I think I must not go into the details of this ideology, because you are well aware of this—because now America has faced something, and you have three backgrounds—American, German, and Jew [here Swarup is referring to my own background as I have described it to him]—so you are well aware of how Islam has created havoc all over the world. It's built into its ideology."

Strikingly, Swarup appears to identify with the Jews as minority victims of ethnic persecution. He speaks with sympathy about the Holocaust and evidently feels that my background will prepare me to understand the situation of Hindus in India today. This idea that Hindus, despite constituting 82 percent of the population, are in the position of a persecuted minority, is ubiquitous in the Hindu right, but I have never before heard the specific comparison of Hindus to Jews. As with Shastri, a deep sense of victimization and humiliation suffuses his narrative of history.

Turning to Gujarat, Swarup first insists that communal riots always break out in Muslim-dominated areas: he claims that this is true all over the country, and in Gujarat in particular. "You will find that communal riots have never started in what you call Hindu-dominated areas." He urges me to read a book by the Muslim secularist intellectual Asghar Ali Engineer, which shows that "every time the initiative came from the Muslims." (I have read enough of Engineer's other writings to doubt very much that this is his view, and my skepticism is confirmed some months later when I interview Engineer in Mumbai.) Godhra, he points out, is a Muslim area.

But, I say, the violence swept throughout the state, covering a wide range of places. "That," says Swarup, "was a natural reaction." He continues by saying that the reactive nature of the violence shows that Gujarat did not represent any policy on the part of the BJP: it "has to be seen as an aberration . . . you see, Godhra was not engineered by the RSS but by the Muslims of Godhra, when they burnt down fifty-six *kar sevaks,* including women and children." When I counter that most of the victims had no connection at all with that incident, and could not even be thought to have one, Swarup answers: "Always, you see—the three thousand people who were killed in the U.S. on September 11 were innocent. They were not outwardly anti-Muslim. So wherever these terrorists or separatists attack, innocents are killed." Even if one grants that Swarup sincerely believed that the train coach was torched by Muslims—as did most people at the time of our conversation—it seems bizarre to believe that the additional Muslim victims throughout Gujarat were the victims *of the same perpetrators.* A strange elision seems to have taken place in his mind: the two thousand Muslim victims of violence in Godhra, who in real life were deliberately killed by Hindus because they were Muslims, have become simply further victims of Muslim terrorism and aggression, like the victims of 9/11. It is as if the Hindu perpetrators were not agents at all, but just instruments being used by the Muslim aggressor.

What about the police, I ask. Doesn't he think that the police did a bad job in not stopping the mob from killing women and children? "You see, I would put it this way. Why do you feel that police can be isolated from the sentiments of the society? They are part of the society and also represent the society. After all, the policemen or army men come from the society; how can they be completely isolated from the reactions and emotions of the society? It is a fact that Godhra created a very strong and deep reaction in the whole of Gujarat, and I would say that there may have been excesses or irresponsible behavior, but you have to look at it kindly and differently also, because why do you expect policemen and the army not to be in tune with the popular sentiments?" In Swarup's mind the police seem to have become not agents

of the law, a force that ought to protect all citizens equally, but simply adjuncts to the mob.

And Narendra Modi: shouldn't Modi have had to resign? "No, no. You see, Modi was the chief minister, and as the chief minister why do you expect him to resign? It's just like saying that Bush should resign because he could not stop 9/11." Once again, the mob violence is neatly folded into the alleged terrorist aggression that preceded it. Modi is just a victim of Muslim terrorism, as Bush is a victim of 9/11. Neither could be expected to stop the violence, because it is impossible to know ahead of time what these terrorists will do. Once again the subsequent violence is treated as an inevitable part of the initial alleged Muslim aggression, and Modi becomes another victim, not a responsible agent linked to Hindu aggression.

Swarup now eagerly outlines his philosophy of gender with evident pride and pleasure. He delivers a monologue on the need for both sexes to admit that they are complementary, not similar, with different emotional needs and makeup. We have accepted that women will have jobs, he says, but it is inevitable that women will face great problems of sexual harassment. Why, he says, do you think that men don't have this problem in the workplace? It proves that the two sexes are different. He now asks his wife to come in. (She has previously entered silently to bring the tea.) He mentions that they will soon be celebrating their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary, and I congratulate him. "We have temperamental differences, different likings, but we have learned this lesson, that we have to live together," he says with evident satisfaction, as his wife, who apparently does not understand English, smiles uncomprehendingly. Divorce is running rampant in America, he continues, because of artificial birth control, which "gave free rein to sexuality," and because of the economic independence of women. "Both things led to the dissolution of the family."

Provoked by these remarks but not wanting to contradict him, I mention that I have spent a good deal of time in Santiniketan, where Rabindranath Tagore founded his school based on critical thinking, imagination, and the empowerment of women through the arts. I ask him how his vision of Indian society differs from Tagore's. "Oh, it is not different," he asserts, while his wife stands silent, holding the tray, smiling.

The Politician: Arun Shourie

On a very cold morning in January 2005, I take a taxi to Arun Shourie's house, wrapping my shawl vainly around my cotton *salwaar kameez* (the two-piece tunic/trousers outfit that is the common everyday apparel of many Indian women), the only sort of clothing I have brought.[5] Even in this unusually frigid winter, taxis continue to drive with the windows wide open, and most homes have no heating. Shourie and I have had a very cordial e-mail correspondence: he knows my work, he has said, and is very happy to meet with me. The former minister of information in the BJP-led government, Shourie was in the inner circle of Prime Minister Vajpayee, a trusted adviser and one of the government's leading voices, particularly in religious matters. Dismayed by the electoral defeat, he has canceled an earlier interview but now has apparently recovered his interest in talking. My intermediary in obtaining an interview with Shourie has been Gurcharan Das, a defender of free markets and zealous opponent of religious violence. He has told me repeatedly that Shourie is one of the most decent and sensitive of the BJP group, not a religious zealot. But he admits that all his conversations with Shourie have been about economic matters, on which they agree.

Shourie has had a varied and complex career. Born in 1941, he worked at the World Bank as an economist from 1967 to 1978. During the late 1970s and the 1980s he established himself as a first-rate investigative journalist, who brought corruption in government to light with tenacity and considerable personal courage. Writing for, and later editing, the *Indian Express,* he exposed corruption in high places and became a leading voice in defense of the freedom of the press during the Emergency, in 1975–1977, when Indira Gandhi suspended civil liberties. On issues ranging from financial corruption to the attrition of civil liberties during the Emergency to the threat to press freedom by a proposed defamation bill, he had a major influence. His intelligence is evidently of the highest order, and his dedication to the truth has won admiration throughout the political spectrum.

Many of Shourie's admirers were both surprised and dismayed to see him promoted in the 1990s to the inner circle of the Hindu right.

In retrospect, perhaps they should not have been so surprised. In Lalit Vachani's acclaimed 1992 documentary, *The Boy in a Branch,* which depicts the education of young Hindu boys in RSS *shakhas,* or "branch" groups, Shourie makes a cameo appearance, raising the saffron flag of the RSS at the 1992 RSS Founders Day rally, shortly before the destruction of the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya. People might have missed him, so briefly does he appear. But in the 2004 sequel, *The Men in a Tree,* much more footage of the Founders Day rally is shown, including Shourie's entire speech. Shourie is dressed in secular clothing, not the RSS uniform of khaki shorts. But his speech gives strong support to the RSS, and especially to its determination to build a temple to the god Ram on the disputed site. He begins with an expression of gratitude that the RSS leaders have invited "an educated-unemployed" like him to "this pure place." He then declares that the symbols of the RSS are national symbols and that the problems the organization is trying to solve are national problems. "The biggest example of this is the movement for the Ram Temple at Ayodhya. We have to achieve the aims of this movement—this much is certain." Shourie is surely aware that the Hindu right has announced its readiness to use violence if it encounters any resistance to its project, which involves pulling down the mosque so that the temple may be built in its place. So his endorsement of the "aims of this movement" cannot help including the use of force. Shourie then criticizes the BJP for being too independent of RSS leadership: it has "cut the umbilical cord," but "you must exercise your influence over the BJP and set it right." After speaking Shourie sits down on the platform, looking extremely uneasy. His mobile bright eyes dart here and there, and he bites his fingernails. Shourie's affiliation with the right is evidently of long standing, but the relationship seems fraught with anxiety.

Throughout the rise of the Hindu right, Shourie has been a prolific author. All his books are recognizably the creations of a smart, determined muckraking journalist. They are polemical, ad hominem, often extremely shrill in tone. The idea that democracy requires respect for those whose opinions differ from one's own plays no role in Shourie's writings, either as theory or as practice. But despite their style, the books are obviously the work of a brilliant man, with wide if idiosyncratic learning, a passion for the freedoms of speech and press, and a

desire to get beneath current events to address underlying issues. His 1978 book, *Symptoms of Fascism,* attacked abuses of power at the time of the Emergency, and thus was contiguous with his journalism. Other attacks on specific figures, such as constitutional architect B. R. Ambedkar and particularly a group of left-wing historians, are similar examples of polemical muckraking. Over the years, however, his books have increasingly focused on the bad effects of religion in society; one after another, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam have come under withering scrutiny and been found utterly without good features.[6] The idea of respect for people's different ways of life and their different religious values appears to have no more place in his thought than the idea of respect for one's intellectual opponents. In each case the writing is suffused with a barely contained anger whose source is not easy to pinpoint. In discussing Christianity, Shourie objects to proselytization. In discussing Islam, focusing on the role of the authoritative clergy and their decrees, or *fatwas,* he finds many convincing instances of authoritarianism, manifested in denials of women's equality, freedom of expression, and scholarship. In discussing Hinduism, he focuses on its otherworldly message, which distracts poor people from their all-too-present misery, and endorses Marx's idea of religion as an "opiate of the masses," arguing that Hinduism in particular has functioned in that way.

The books are, in their own way, both brilliant and courageous. But nowhere does Shourie seek to provide balance; nowhere is there a sense of complexity. All have the same mocking, superior tone. The only religious thinker for whom Shourie has unalloyed admiration is Gandhi, who, in his view, understood the deceptiveness of traditional Hinduism—that it was merely a cover-up for powerful class interests—but was able to use the language of the tradition to turn the tradition on its head and speak in favor of political empowerment and the mobilization of the lower classes.

Who is Arun Shourie? Liberal defender of freedom of expression, without much respect for what other people express; fighter for individual liberty, who participates as a guest of honor in a mass quasi-fascist rally and supports its advocacy of mass violence; member of a religion-based political movement, with a deep and vitriolic hatred of religion. As I ride to my appointment, I ponder this question.

Because of a medical emergency concerning his son, Shourie has had to confine our appointment to forty minutes. He is deeply apologetic. Shourie's home is, by Indian standards, luxurious: not huge, but architecturally interesting and very comfortably arranged, with high-quality carpets and modern furnishings. A security guard lets me in at the gate, and a servant ushers me to Shourie's study, a lovely book-lined room on the top floor. Here I see a face already familiar from photos and film: a long straight mustache, restless burning eyes, a bald head fringed with thick gray hair. As I thank him for meeting with me, a servant brings us the best coffee I have ever had in India.

Speaking in a very soft voice, almost a whisper, Shourie explains that his books about religion were reactions to the birth of his son, who has multiple disabilities. Seeing the suffering his son was enduring, he turned to the Hindu scriptures, the Quran, and the Old and New Testaments, and the books that followed were "a scream against the explanations given for suffering." (Since he later mentions that the son is thirty-nine years old, thus born in 1966, while the books on the religions were published in 1995, 1998, and 2000, it is hard to credit that the books were an immediate reaction.)

I begin by asking what led him to get so deeply involved with the Hindu right, given his scathing attack on Hindu religion. He replies that he is no longer looking to traditional religion for an explanation of suffering. "If I was to say what my religious practice is, it is mainly now Buddhist meditation. I am a Hindu by birth and ritual and so on, but the things that have sustained me are all Buddhist." The turn to the BJP, then, was not motivated by religious beliefs. Instead, he told me, it came at the time of the famous Shah Bano case (a case involving the Muslim law of divorce), when Rajiv Gandhi's government seemed to him to be making inappropriate concessions to Muslim clerics. Shourie believed that this sort of dealmaking was likely to prompt a strong reaction "even in a disparate community like the Hindus. Exactly that happened." Thus Shourie seemed to be using the logic of action-reaction to explain or even condone the violence that took place at Ayodhya. It seems odd to blame this violence on government concessions to Muslim clerics, since the people who lost out as a result of Rajiv Gandhi's Muslim Women's Bill of 1986 were Muslim women, not Hindus of either sex. (The bill deprived Muslim women of the right to petition for maintenance after divorce under the Criminal Code.) "I can tell you

that today as we are talking the same thing is beginning again now," in a parallel reaction to political concessions given recently by the new Congress-led government to both Muslims and Christians. Shourie's word "reaction" is vague, but since the current case is supposed to be "exactly the same" as the case of Ayodhya, violence would seem to be a central part of its meaning.

As examples of the allegedly violence-provoking measures of today's government, Shourie mentions affirmative-action quotas for Muslims in one state, a quota for Christians demanded but not yet enacted in another, and "the manner in which this Shankaracharya's case is being handled." This is a case involving a revered Hindu holy man in the southern state of Tamil Nadu who seems to have hired hit men to kill a temple official who had evidence that the Shankaracharya was financially corrupt and that his junior associate was sexually corrupt. (The associate, like the Shankaracharya, is supposed to be celibate, but evidently used temple funds to hire women and buy luxurious food.) The hit men confessed, and since they were incompetents they did not destroy the written evidence of the Shankaracharya's corruption, so all that is now in the hands of the police. Whether the evidence will result in a criminal conviction is doubtful, since the hit men's confessions were obtained with a lot of procedural bungling. But the man's guilt seems overwhelmingly likely. What is controversial, and what Shourie and other BJP politicians appear to object to, is the fact that this holy man and his subordinate have been arrested and put in jail, hardly a surprising or shocking result if one believes in the rule of law.

Shourie blames the current climate of violence, then, on affirmative action and on the failure to exempt a likely murderer from the ordinary scrutiny of the criminal law. He now adds a third culprit: left-wing historians and their "absolute perversity." He asserts that if these historians regain control over the writing of history textbooks, as they have recently begun to do under the new government, "I bet my life that you will see a reaction if this thing continues for another five years; you will see another great reaction." This stance is reminiscent of recent statements by some U.S. politicians blaming violence against judges on the legal opinions of other judges: the implication is that homicide can be condoned if someone has behaved in a way the majority does not like.

I ask if Gujarat a case of such a "reaction." Now Shourie becomes

more guarded. "No, I don't think so. I think Gujarat was just the government machinery looking the other way and mobs taking over, exactly what happened in Delhi in 1984" (the year of the anti-Sikh riots). Does he feel that the BJP should have condemned the violence more strongly? There was, Shourie says, "a great internal debate"; he knows from personal experience that (then) Prime Minister Vajpayee "felt very strongly that Mr. Narendra Modi must resign," but changed his mind after consultations with other Asian leaders who had had experiences of Muslim terrorism. Shourie represents Vajpayee's Goa speech as a response to these interactions, but also as a response to Shourie's personal advice, as the Cabinet's acknowledged "expert on terrorism and Islam."

As Shourie summarizes some of the main points made in his book on Islam and maintains that Muslims constitute a continuing danger to democracy in India, he ignores the fact that Muslims have lived as citizens in India's democracy for more than fifty years, albeit unusually poor and subject to discrimination of many kinds. Indian Muslims have few links to Pakistan, and no terrorist network. The great exception is Kashmir, where terrorist organizations are certainly involved, some of them originating in Pakistan. But Shourie does not base his case on this localized and exceptional case. So how does he try to demonstrate that Muslims in India are aggressive and dangerous, and that in general Muslims are dangerous wherever they are?

As in his book, he relies on the existence of a grassroots proselytizing movement within Islam called the Tablighi Jamaat, a group that seeks converts in rural areas and tries to get people to abandon Hinduism for Islam. He dwells on the group's alleged requirement of eating beef immediately after conversion as a practice that "immediately snaps ties with the rest of the community from which they have been converted." He believes that the Tabligh is "the most powerful Islamic movement in India and Bangladesh." Neither in the book nor in our conversation does Shourie offer any convincing evidence that this group is connected with violence; at most he shows what everyone knows, that conversion can create barriers between people and their former community. And yet his own personal bottom line is strongly inflected with negative emotions, both anger at the divisions allegedly caused by conversion and fear of social disruption by Muslims.

Shourie's pre-evidentiary commitment to the idea that Muslims are behind violence leads to a moment of anger. I mention the Banerjee report about the train at Godhra, which has come out just a few days earlier. Shourie's eyes blaze; he pounds his fist on the table and explosively says, "Idiocy!" The abrupt transition from whisper to shout is jolting. But, say I, the commission of independent engineers came to exactly the same result. "If the central government uses such idiocies to dislodge Modi, then of course they are in grave error," he replies. I ask him why he thinks the report is idiocy. "Please now," he says, his voice dropping to a whisper again, "it will take a long time." Knowing that our remaining time is short, I allow him to change the subject.

Whatever the explanation is for his obsessive focus on the Muslim danger, Shourie claims that the BJP really aspires to be an inclusive party. When I ask whether it is wise, then, to put Hindutva so much at the center, he replies, "What is with this word Hindutva? If you look at the word it is becoming inclusive itself. Don't go by the word but by the way they are formulating it. By the content they are trying to endow into that word." People today, he says, are trying to reformulate the ideology handed down from founders such as M. S. Golwolkar and V. D. Savarkar. While using the same words, they change what is meant by them—just as Gandhi, he adds, used traditional Hindu vocabulary while utterly changing the understanding of Hinduism. "Now that is exactly what is happening with the BJP. The words are the same—Hindutva—[but] you talk to Mr. Advani—I have got to know him in the last five to ten years—you talk to Mr. Vajpayee, but their content of the word is completely different. It's not a put-on, it's well recognized you can't just throw out twelve *crore* [120 million] Muslims."

When I ask him about the role of the Bajrang Dal, a group dedicated to violence from which the BJP receives support, he calls it a "marginal group." I say, "But you know, let's say an American southern politician took support from the Ku Klux Klan, then their claim to be in favor of racial equality would not ring true." Shourie replies, "If that southern politician was that important that he controlled the entire Democratic or Republican party and then took the help of the KKK, you would be able to read the KKK into a position of influence." But that, he continues, is not the case here: the national party does not really derive support from those groups, and has actually sought to

marginalize them. What one should consider instead is "whether in the six years in which he [Vajpayee] was in office any one of these groups or individuals had even the slightest influence on any decision of government." As for Pravin Togadia, with his violent statements, Shourie insists that he, too, has been marginalized. "What influence did Pravin Togadia have on any policy of the government? In fact they are the ones who most strongly condemned Mr. Advani and Mr. Vajpayee . . . See, you have to look at the evidence as a whole. You are looking at it with preconceived spectacles. Either you are asking me these questions that way or I personally feel that you are. See, you look at Togadia's statements against Muslims. You are not looking at Togadia's statements against Advani. Why not? I think that is a question to ask." He insists that the effort of the two leaders was to make the party truly inclusive by marginalizing those in favor of hate politics.

We now have a very interesting discussion of education and critical thinking, where we are in strong agreement in criticizing government schools for a lifeless regimen of rote learning. Shourie favors more incentives to industry and private foundations to set up educational alternatives and also media alternatives; India, for example, does not encourage charitable donation in its tax structure. I say that there is always the danger that commercial pressures will prevail and that this result will lead to another type of dumbing-down. "Could be, but there is always a danger, and we can't not make the first step on the ground that if I continue to walk in that direction I will eventually drown in the sea. I might be a thousand miles away from the sea." As we arrive at this moment of amity and relative agreement, I see that it is time for him to leave for the airport, and I quickly thank him and depart.

K. K. Shastri, Devendra Swarup, and Arun Shourie represent the spectrum of the Hindu right in India today. In Shastri we see a man who, despite his scholarly trappings, is basically the head of a group of thugs. He has no hesitation in owning up to violence; indeed he espouses the view that violence is the only appropriate response to the Muslim threat. His retraction of his statement about the VHP's keeping lists of Muslims probably stems from fear of prosecution rather than from any lofty motive. Shastri is sinister, but in a very open and even naive way. He is not the sort of person who could lead a national political movement. He seems too crude and politically unimaginative to be a large-scale danger.

Devendra Swarup is a figure of far greater weight and subtlety. As with RSS leaders generally, his ascetic lifestyle and his intellectual and spiritual discipline are impressive. The values of simplicity, loyalty, and dedication that he espouses have evidently organized his life as well, and this in a nation where the temptations of elitism and hierarchy are rife. India really needs these values, and people are right to respect them. One can see in Swarup a great deal of what has made the RSS a huge influence in the nation as a whole, and the contrast between his low-key seriousness and Shastri's wildness provides a good sense of the difference between the RSS and the VHP. Swarup strikes me as a conformist thinker rather than a powerfully original or even a moderately critical one. But it is this sort of organized conformity, combined with disciplined coordination, that has made the RSS such a powerful force. Its members are never heard saying anything ill-judged or outside the straight party line: it's the other guy's fault, he started it, and what happened later was all spontaneous. Nor are they found condoning or participating in violence. The only moment of fissure, I thought, was in Swarup's statement that one cannot expect the police not to share the attitudes of the surrounding community: he ought to have said that the violence was too widespread to stop, but instead he admitted that the police misbehaved and aided the rioters.

Shastri and Swarup share an intense fear of Muslim takeover. Shastri's tone is more emotional, Swarup's more measured, but the message is the same: Muslims cannot live peacefully with others, they are a constant danger, and if that danger flares up, reactive force is a reasonable response, even when that force vastly exceeds the violence of any putative assault. They represent themselves as wanting a peaceful, inclusive India, and they represent Hinduism as cherishing values of purity and nonviolence. (Swarup's prominent display of Gandhi's name was one part of his careful self-presentation, distancing himself from those on the right who defend Gandhi's assassin.) And yet, for him, the violence was not deplorable; it was inevitable, and the Muslims are to blame.

Shastri and Swarup have another link: their obsession with female sexual purity and the need to guard women against some type of sexual

danger—Muslim rapacity in the case of Shastri, Western promiscuity in the case of Swarup. Both raised the topic spontaneously and pressed it despite my lack of enthusiasm. Shastri's prurient delight when touching Mona's arm and warning her of the Muslim danger was striking. Scarcely less so, however, was Swarup's eager desire to turn the topic to his own conventional marriage and the sexual promiscuity of Western working women, and above all the way in which he kept talking about the sexual foibles of Western women to me in English while his wife looked on uncomprehending. At the same time, both men expressed a strong sense of wounded masculinity: the Muslim is the male aggressor, and he has dominated the "pure" and unaggressive Hindu. Perhaps asserting patriarchal guardianship and control over women is a way of righting the balance.

Do these men hate anyone? Shastri seems inspired by both fear and hate, though he would not put it that way: he'd say it was a necessary defense of peace and purity. Swarup plays those cards much closer to his chest. He does not appear emotional at all; for emotion he substitutes a cold and logical defense of violent acts as inevitable and blameless. He is the bureaucrat who puts up with and rationalizes violence, not a mastermind; for just that reason he is a valuable cog in the machinery that produces violence. He seems to lack not only the capacity for critical thought but also the sort of moral imagination that makes sense of the suffering of others.

Arun Shourie is the "class act" of the Hindu right, a man of genuine gifts, with a passion for truth and brave past work in the defense of truth. He has well-thought-out, albeit controversial, economic views and policies and good ideas about the importance of critical thinking in education. He portrays himself as wanting the BJP to lose its extremism and to marginalize violent elements. He is a person of subtlety, with a complex history and, it would seem, a rich inner life. Unlike the others, he does not seem to have any obsessions about women and their purity—which contributed to my feeling that this was a man who lives in my world, and who could in principle even be a friend.

And yet there is no getting round the fact that Arun Shourie joined the BJP not for its economic policies alone, but also as the result of an apparently sincere conviction that Muslims are a great danger to India and must be kept under control. Although he professes to favor nonviolence and the marginalization of extremist groups such as the Bajrang Dal, it remains true that he nowhere denounced the Gujarat violence and that since 1992 at least he has been associating with people who foment violence, apparently without condemning them. He even takes some of the credit for convincing Vajpayee not to demand Modi's resignation.

Shourie is not a dogmatic organization man like Swarup. He is surely no fanatic like Shastri. He has an intellectual quickness that both of them lack, and an evident emotional complexity that they do not reveal. And yet there is something volatile and emotionally violent in his character, something wound up and wounded, something that lashes out at a perceived threat and refuses to take seriously the evidence that it might be not a threat. Following his suggestion, one might attribute this instability to his pain as the father of a severely disabled child, and the sense of helplessness issuing from that experience, which surely explains at least part of his intense anger at text-based religion and at all organized pieties. But so many people have deep sorrow in life, and sorrow does not always lead to a persecutory and therefore highly dangerous view of others. Sorrow might have led, instead, to new sympathy with the underdog.

The Disillusioned: Gurcharan Das

As I think of these choices, I picture my friend Gurcharan Das[7] walking toward me on a cold Chicago day, a small, round man around five feet four, dressed in an expensive camel-hair coat and an elegant black felt hat. Although Gurcharan has known Arun Shourie since his school days, respects him, and shares his economic policies, his physical presence is utterly different. Gurcharan exudes warmth and gentleness. He is also very funny. (None of the three whom I have just described appears to have a sense of humor.) Invariably, Gurcharan has great curiosity about the other person.

Gurcharan Das came to Chicago in 2002 to learn more about classical Indian thought from Wendy Doniger and other scholars at our university. He audited my class on literature and ethics in ancient Greece and participated vigorously. The next year he came to talk to my gradu-

ate seminar on religion and the state. Perhaps this history biases my account of him. I think, however, that the causation goes the other way: it was not an antecedent friendship that made me view his life differently from the other three lives; it was because of who he is that I wanted to form a friendship with him.

Although Gurcharan Das is among the wealthiest men in India, he is not one of the nouveaux riches, for whom conspicuous consumption, American style, is a mark of success. His home, though elegant, is simple, and his collection of contemporary Indian paintings, though priceless, is that of a connoisseur who promotes the careers of indigenous artists. He dresses in fine but simple clothes, usually Indian style (with the exception of the hat and winter coat, for which he has no use in India). Dinner at his home is simple vegetarian food; his vegetarianism has ethical as well as habitual roots.

Gurcharan Das began life as a writer; he wrote a novel about Partition, based on his family's experience, and several plays on historical and social themes, which are still produced. He studied in the United States briefly in the 1950s, returning for an undergraduate degree at Harvard in philosophy and government, during which time he studied Sanskrit with the great scholar Daniel Ingalls and philosophy with John Rawls. Rawls, who was his tutor, was "perhaps the most important influence on my life."[8] Later in life he received a degree from the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School. He soon discovered that he had a talent for business as well as for the arts, and he rose to be chief executive officer of Procter and Gamble in India (1985–1992) and then vice-president and managing director of Procter and Gamble Worldwide. In 1995 he took early retirement, becoming wealthy from venture capital and all the while writing a regular column on political and cultural matters for *The Times of India*. His most famous book, *India Unbound* (2001), is a defense of a free-market approach to the Indian economy. Meanwhile he has spent a lot of his time studying classical Hindu texts, literary and philosophical, because he believes that the practice of business in India can be greatly improved by thinking about Hindu notions of *dharma* (moral rectitude, or duty). He is writing a book about connections between the ethical ideas of the *Mahabharata* and contemporary failures in public and corporate governance, a topic on which he frequently lectures to businessmen in the United States and in India.

So Gurcharan Das is a lover of Indian, and particularly Hindu, traditions. In fact he probably knows at least as much about them as anyone else described in this chapter. Yet he has no stomach for the politics of religious division. In *India Unbound,* though sympathetic to the BJP for economic reasons, he chastised the party for its reliance on a politics of hatred. He described himself as fed up with the economic errors of the Congress Party and drawn to the BJP for its promise of reform, and yet he clearly felt great unease about the record of the party in religious matters. This theme has become increasingly salient in his columns. In 2002, after Gujarat, he became deeply disillusioned with the BJP and spearheaded the revival of the Swatantra Party, a secular free-market party that he hoped to forge into a free-market liberal alternative to the BJP. This attempt has not met with success, largely because the 2004 elections brought to power a prime minister, Manmohan Singh, of reformist economic views and proven competence, and thus shifted the Congress Party's economic profile. Business-minded people who abhor the politics of religious division can now feel that Congress will listen to their views—although Gurcharan emphasizes that the scope of reform so far is much too narrow to satisfy him, and he still hopes that a free-market party may take hold. Nonetheless he has also greeted the new regime with hope. In a column in July 2004 he called the election of 2004 "a well deserved slap to Narendra Modi's fascist face."[9] At present he is focusing on a plan to give a substantial portion of his wealth to promote reforms in public education.

When I interviewed Gurcharan Das in Delhi in June 2004, I had already read many of his works and known him for some time, so my aim was to fill in gaps in my knowledge. Gurcharan grew up in northwest India, in an area that is now part of Pakistan; the whole region was a major site of religious violence at the time of Partition. He remembers that when he was only four, in 1946, his mother was alarmed by an incident between Hindus and Muslims in a local railway station. Soon afterward the family (very much like the family in his novel) was forced to leave its home, never to return. Did his mother and the rest of his family absorb a sense of bitterness toward Muslims because of Partition, I ask. "I think intuitively some of it must have been there, must be." And the sheer fact of leaving home, only to find out later that one's home was in a different country, was very painful. In some ways, he says, many Indians "have not accepted that Pakistan is there. Some-

how . . . we locked our homes in the war . . . and said that we would go back, and my grandmother had all these forty-two keys—I remember that she brought these keys with her, and she locked everything and that we would go back there."

Despite these traumas, however, he did not learn anti-Muslim ideas in his home. His family's religious practices were unconventional and austere, and his father eventually became attached to a guru, forcing the family to spend long stretches of time in an ashram. Only in relatives' homes did he learn about more traditional Hindu worship, with all the various gods. Meanwhile he learned very little about Muslims. A few were in his school later on in Delhi, "but you know, when you're in school you talk about sports and you're busy playing cricket and hockey, and you do school work." Never did he know Muslim classmates well enough to be invited to their homes.

In fact, he continues, the problem with the sort of education he received in the post-independence era was that they didn't learn very much about any religion, not even their own. "That's what I think is the real tragedy. Why did I after retiring from business want to go to the University of Chicago to read the *Mahabharata* with Wendy Doniger? Because I'd never been exposed to it, and I think that is a failing of our education system." In general, the attitude of his friends, even today, is that someone who takes an interest in the Hindu tradition is bound to be motivated by sectarian Hindu-first motives. When he told an old friend that he had been reading classical Sanskrit texts, the response was "Good God, man! You haven't turned Hindutva, have you?" And "a woman, in fact my mother's friend, said [if] she is going to the temple, she won't tell people because she is afraid they are going to pounce on her and think she has become some kind of communalist." When religion is equated with extremism, it is easy for religious extremists to monopolize this important domain of human life.

How did this marginalization of religion begin? Nehru, he remembers, communicated the idea of equal respect, not the idea that we ought to leave religion behind. Because he was such a "charismatic" figure, people picked up this idea of pluralism from him. Yet at the same time, in subtler ways, Nehru invited a narrower view of secularism, because he himself was so clearly agnostic. Meanwhile the damage

done by Partition surely reinforced the idea that people had better avoid speaking about religion if they were to have a peaceful nation. So religion became privatized as a way of not reopening old wounds. All the time that the RSS was building a grassroots network, liberal pluralists were avoiding the entire issue. Some Congress politicians, inspired by Marxism, even adopted a "strident kind of secularism" that mocked all religion. "Had the Congress been smart, then they would have tried to create a gentler respect for each other's space." In a column in 2003 he wrote: "Our secularism has failed to stem the tide of intolerance because most secularists do not value the religious life. In well-meaning efforts to limit religion to the private life they behave as though all religious people are superstitious and stupid."[10] It was not always that way. Earlier there had been leaders like Gandhi, Maulana Azad, and Vivekenanda who could relate to "the vast majority of religiously minded Indians"[11] and show them that "true religion is humanistic and has nothing to do with hating others."[12]

Gurcharan Das doesn't mince words about Gujarat. It was "murderous carnage" and a great defeat for India's finest ideals. Referring to the ideas of the emperor Ashoka, who taught religious toleration in the third century B.C.E., he wrote in 2003: "Here is a wonderful insight for our times: you damage your own religion when you malign another's . . . Those who call for a Hindu nation not only harm the nation, they also damage Hinduism." And then, commenting on parallels between U.S. and Indian history, he continued: "We don't want India to be like the old Massachusetts Bay Colony, which defined citizenship unequally and witch hunted minorities. Just as religious tolerance spread to the American colonies by the sheer need for the diverse people of America to live together, so must this happen in India. We want an India of Ashoka's vision where people of all beliefs live decently together."[13]

What makes one man a pillar of the Hindu right, another man a disillusioned critic? Gurcharan Das and Arun Shourie are similar in many ways—in social class, in economic views, in an international business-oriented outlook. What, then, leads Shourie to stick with the BJP and promote its anti-Muslim agenda, Gurcharan Das to denounce violence and work for a tolerant humanism?

One factor is surely that Gurcharan Das does not seek personal po-

litical power. Thinking of Shourie's unease in that film of the 1992 rally, one wonders whether it is not the expression of a man going along with something he does not really like for the sake of establishing himself in politics. Surely it is important to Shourie to maintain that the BJP is more moderate at the top than one might think, and that its ideology has quietly undergone a major transformation. Perhaps he was telling himself back then that he would buy into Hindutva in order to be in a position to alter it in just that way. Gurcharan Das, by contrast, has the luxury of not saying what he doesn't want to say, because he is not trying to impress anyone or win any votes. Even the refounding of the Swatantra Party is something he sees as a social service, not as a bid for personal power. (He offered to finance the movement but refused to be a candidate.)

But there are other differences. Shourie hates the ideals and promises of religion, whereas Gurcharan Das is (squarely within the Hindu tradition) a religious humanist, who still hopes for good to be done in religion's, and Hinduism's, name. This respect for the authentic traditions of Hinduism has prevented him from lining up with the BJP's politics of religious hatred, and has allowed Shourie to go along with it: for Gurcharan Das, religion is something noble that should not be debased by being linked with murder, and Hinduism stands for pluralism and toleration, not for violence; for Shourie, all religion is base, the naked face of power politics.

Another major difference is that Shourie's whole outlook is formed by fear of Muslims. Gurcharan Das simply doesn't think this way at all. He is a man not of fear, but of hope. He always has a new constructive plan to bring better lives to people: the Swatantra Party, the lectures on morality in business, the new plan to reform public education. Maybe it all comes down to hope. For Gurcharan Das, belief in the possibility of human goodness and hope for that goodness make it impossible to demonize an entire people or group. Each is a separate human life, and we must wait for evidence of guilt before condemning. (Sometimes this hopefulness borders on naiveté, as with his early optimism about the BJP, and as with his insistence, even in 2006, that Arun Shourie is admirable for "his deep personal integrity and commitment.") For Shourie, life seems to contain little hope of goodness or of progress—only, perhaps, the Buddhist hope for detachment from pain, release from the "scream" at the birth of a child condemned to suffering.

Behind hope, in turn, lies the work of the imagination. Gurcharan Das's ability to connect so affectionately with people is related to his intuitive sense of each person's inner world, his quick ability to endow another form with life and spirit, skills that he developed through his long engagement with the arts, and that probably had deeper roots in the childhood that he remembers with such vividness. Shourie's dark, anxiety-ridden vision of a meaningless, hopeless world, by contrast, allows him to avoid imagining another individual's view of life, another person's pain or terror. The quality most lacking in his books is the ability to think from anyone else's point of view. He put it just right when he characterized the books as a "scream" of personal pain. In the end, nobody is real except Arun Shourie himself.

Studying these four people suggests some preliminary thoughts about the forces that threaten democracy in India, thoughts that will need to be made more precise by a study of the history of the Hindu right and of the democracy itself. One thing we can clearly see is that religious violence, as these four men understand it, is not closely connected to religion. All four of the people sketched above are Hindus of a sort, but only Gurcharan Das seems to be inspired at a deep level by a love of Hindu religious traditions, which he understands, rightly, as fostering a spirit of pluralism and respect. Gandhi is a particularly deep source of inspiration for him, although he also honors "religious humanists" from other traditions, such as the liberal Muslim leader Maulana Azad. By contrast, both Devendra Swarup and K. K. Shastri, like the original founders of the Hindu right, think of the unity of their movement in ethnic and cultural terms, not in terms of religious devotion. Although their ascetic lifestyle has its sources in Hindu traditions, and although Swarup pays lip service to Gandhi, we find in neither man a true interest in Gandhian nonviolence and inclusiveness, and no interest in the pluralism that has traditionally characterized Hindu religion. Shastri breaks openly from Gandhi's vision of Hinduism in his disdain for the lower castes; Swarup breaks with Gandhi just as fundamentally, by holding, with Shastri, that violence is a necessary and legitimate response to a perceived situation of powerlessness. Of course these men might have broken away from Gandhi's particular vision of Hinduism and yet proven deeply religious in keeping with some other vision of Hinduism. In fact, however, both focus on issues of ethnic solidarity

and national strength, and religious devotion seems irrelevant to their political thinking. As for Shourie, he is openly contemptuous of Hinduism, which he despises as much as he despises Islam and Christianity.

Gurcharan Das blames some of the current politics of religious violence on the fact that Indians currently study little about their own religious traditions and that liberal pluralists, despising religion, have tried to marginalize it. The careers of Swarup, Shastri, and Shourie suggest that his point is valid. That the ideology of hatred and violence has been widely accepted as an authentic form of Hinduism is an astonishing fact, given Gandhi's role in the founding of the country. Wider awareness of Hindu traditions of pluralism and respect would surely make it more difficult for young people to identify the politics of the Hindu right with genuine religion, as many clearly do.

The problem engendering violence is not, then, Hinduism itself—if one can speak of an "itself" in a religion so multifaceted. Nor is it any threat posed by Indian Muslims (the case of Kashmir always excepted). Shastri, Swarup, and even Shourie assert that Muslims and, to a lesser extent, Christians cannot live at peace with others, but they offer only party-line dogma in justification of this belief. They clearly hope that Americans will accept their claims without pressing for evidence, given the negative view of Muslims that they think most Americans already have. Because Indian Muslims do not fit the picture they want to paint, they are virtually silent about Indian Muslims, preferring to focus on 9/11 and the threat of terrorism in other nations, as if that justified violent treatment of peaceful civilians in Gujarat.

The "clash" we are beginning to see, then, is not a mythic clash between a Western democratic vision and a violent Muslim vision. It appears to be a clash between two different sorts of democratic citizens, employing different versions of the Hindu tradition. There are Indians, and Gurcharan Das is one of them, who do not fear difference, who seek peaceful relations with people from other religions and ways of life, and who see democratic institutions as strong enough to provide the groundwork for a future of mutual respect. There are also Indians, and Shastri, Swarup, and Shourie are all in different ways Indians of this sort, who fear religious and ethnic differences as a deep threat to order and safety, who have learned to hate people who insist on living in a way that sets them off from the majority, and whose anxious desire for control leads them to legitimize violence. These two types of democratic citizens can be found in many if not most modern nations.

At a deeper level, these four men differ strikingly in the quality of imagination that governs their relationships with strangers. Three of the four have little ability to imagine the life of people who differ from themselves, to see an inner world in a stranger. They see members of other groups primarily as looming threats to their own safety and preeminence. Somehow life in a pluralistic democracy, and the education they received in that democracy, failed to cultivate their imaginative capacities and their capacities for sympathy. Gurcharan Das has a curiosity and flexibility of mind that the other three lack—whether through his connection to the arts or through some deeper processes in his childhood. The second "clash" we are beginning to see, then, is a clash inside the person, between the forces of fear and reactive domination and the forces that lead to compassion and respect—a "clash" that must be mediated through effective education and a decent public culture. As Gandhi knew, democracy must learn how to cultivate the inner world of human beings, equipping each citizen to contend against the passion for domination and to accept the reality, and the equality, of others.

3 TAGORE, GANDHI, NEHRU

Tagore, the aristocratic artist, turned democrat with proletarian sympathies, represented essentially the cultural traditions of India, the tradition of accepting life in the fullness thereof and going through it with song and dance. Gandhi, more a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant, represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, *The Discovery of India*

Archetypes

The crimes of Gujarat were the work of individual human beings and a contemporary political movement. Both the crimes and the resilient democracy's eventual repudiation of them grew, however, out of a longer history that involves both the ideas of the founders and the structure of the institutions they designed.

Indians often tell their nation's story through the stories of three great men. All were champions of independence from Britain; all played a major role in crafting a self-sufficient democracy. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) took little part in the politics of the independence struggle,[1] but as an artist and public intellectual of worldwide fame (the first Indian to win the Nobel Prize, in 1913) he was a cultural and ethical leader, voicing moral opposition to British violence and creating what we might call the public poetry of the new nation, including its national anthem. Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948), religious moralist and supremely creative man of action, inaugurated and led the strategy of nonviolent resistance to British rule that eventually won India the sympathy and respect of the whole world and made Brit-

ain's domination unsustainable. The acknowledged leader of the independence movement, he saw the new nation's birth in 1947 but shortly thereafter was assassinated by a young Hindu fanatic who objected to his indulgence toward Muslims. Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), also a key leader of the independence movement, who spent much of his youth in British prisons, became the chief architect of independent India, whose government he led for seventeen years. He worked closely with Gandhi, though not without friction; he knew slightly and greatly admired Tagore, sending his daughter, Indira, to Tagore's progressive school in Santiniketan, West Bengal.

All three men sought a united India free from caste discrimination and interreligious hostility. All criticized many age-old hierarchical traditions and their allegedly religious basis. All, though in quite different ways, pursued the empowerment of women and supported their full political equality. And all held views utterly opposed to many of those held by the Hindu right, both in that time and in our own. All supported a state neutral in religious matters and rejected the idea of defining India as a Hindu nation. All sought the inclusion of Muslims as full citizens in the new nation, and all would have reacted to the events in Gujarat in 2002 with the deepest alarm and moral condemnation. All three, then, are in their own ways fathers of the kind of democratic pluralism that is in jeopardy in today's India. (The Hindu right today typically pays respectful lip service to Gandhi—without utterly disowning his assassin, who is praised on many Hindu-right websites, and without squaring their piety toward Gandhi with their founders' intense opposition at the time of the independence struggle; they typically repudiate Nehru and ignore Tagore.)

Despite these similarities, the three men's views about how to achieve democracy and how to preserve it differed significantly. Tagore and Gandhi openly disagreed about many matters through much of their lives, albeit with great mutual respect. Nehru looked to the two older men as mentors and guides but understood that on many matters they advocated opposite directions. Though personally close to Gandhi, he often criticized him along lines similar to Tagore's critique. At the same time, there was much about the positive side of Tagore's thought that Nehru neglected, ultimately to the nation's detriment. In many ways, then, the stories of the three illuminate contemporary problems.

The primary aim of this chapter is to locate strengths and weaknesses in the ideas of each of the three "founders," not to add to the already voluminous biographical literature on their careers. We must reach that comparative critique, however, through a narrative history that presents the story of India's founding vividly to those to whom it is new. Ultimately I shall argue that India's strength as a democracy owes much to each of the three men: to Tagore's prescient and subtle thought about religious pluralism, his development of a school that focused on critical thinking and the development of sympathy, and his creation of a "public poetry" in which to embody the vision of a pluralistic vision; to Gandhi's passionate egalitarianism, his rhetorical brilliance, and his compelling critique of the desire for domination; and, to Nehru's practical political vision, his personal integrity as a leader, and his (qualified) embrace of a non-Gandhian yet still egalitarian modernity. All three rightly saw the "clash" that the new democracy faced as one among groups of different sorts within the society, as well as among different desires and tendencies within the individual self.

In each, however, one can locate faults that help explain the rise and limited success of the Hindu right. Tagore's educational experiments, so crucial for a budding democracy, failed to spread outside Bengal, in part because of his own unwillingness to delegate leadership to others. Gandhi's repudiation of modernity led to no constructive economic program, and his asceticism led to a vision of gender relations that was not helpful in forging an inclusive democracy. Nehru's economic policies often come in for criticism, and some of this criticism is justified. A deeper fault, however, has less frequently been discussed. His disdain for religion, together with his idea of a modernity based upon scientific rather than humanistic values, led to what was perhaps the most serious defect in the new nation: the failure to create a liberal-pluralistic public rhetorical and imaginative culture whose ideas could have worked at the grassroots level to oppose those of the Hindu right.

Tagore: Poet, Educator, Internationalist

When Americans think of Rabindranath Tagore, if they think of him at all, they typically picture the commanding white-robed figure who

appeared often on the international lecture circuit, with his long white beard and flowing hair, reading the mystical religious poetry for which he won the Nobel Prize. But this picture is only one small segment of the complex and kaleidoscopic personality who dominated the cultural life of West Bengal, and to some extent the nation as a whole, for close to a century.[2] Tagore was indeed a fine poet, and he did have religious views, some of which might be described as mystical (although he was in essence a religious humanist who defended reason and scientific progress). But he was also a writer of plays, short stories, novels, and essays; the dominant ethos in these prose works is critical, antihierarchical, and supportive of free self-expression. He was, further, a composer of songs and musical dramas; an innovative choreographer and dancer, one of the leading founders of "modern dance" and a kindred spirit of Isadora Duncan; and a painter whose works are more highly valued with the passing years. The central passion of his life was education: most of his Nobel Prize money and income went to support an experimental school and, later, a university that he established in the town of Santiniketan (Abode of Peace)[3] in West Bengal, under three hours by train from Kolkata.[4] The goal of the school was to produce independently reasoning citizens who could think critically about tradition, understand the variety of world cultures and religions, and develop their imaginations and emotions through the arts. The arts held a central place in the curriculum, with music and dance especially prominent. Tagore also championed the sciences and understood scientific progress to be central in raising the living standard of the rural poor. He linked the school to an ambitious rural development pilot project in the nearby town of Sriniketan.

Tagore was born on May 7, 1861, into an aristocratic landowning Bengali family; he was the youngest of fifteen children (thirteen of whom lived past childhood). His grandfather Dwarkanath Tagore had been a sophisticated world traveler and bon vivant, fluent in Arabic and Persian, and also an entrepreneur and banker; his father, Maharshi Debendranath, was a leader of local religious reforms who had a deep knowledge of both Hindu and Islamic traditions. His older siblings included some very gifted artists, musicians, and writers; they, and in some cases their cultivated wives, made the house a lively center of creative activity and political contestation, including critical argument about the role of women. (Rabindranath's mother, who died when he

was fourteen, was conservative and retiring and seems not to have taken a prominent role in these debates.)

The Tagores were Brahmins; that is, they belonged to the highest caste, which at that time still insisted on its superior status and its separateness from others. But an indigenous local reform movement had already begun to challenge the caste hierarchy, as well as other customs such as child marriage, *sati* (the immolation of a widow on her husband's funeral pyre), and *purdah* (the seclusion of women). One of Tagore's brothers, Satyendranath, was a strong advocate of women's social empowerment and caused an uproar by allowing his wife to travel to England alone with their children. Tagore's father was an admirer of the Bengali religious reformer Rammohun Roy (1772–1833), the architect of some of these reforms; he joined the associated religious reform movement, called the Brahmo Samaj, which was strongly committed to the education and social empowerment of women.[5] At that time the movement excluded non-Brahmins; Rabindranath later proposed changing this rule. Young Rabindranath followed his father's example and joined the Samaj, although temperamentally he was not satisfied by the rather puritanical and anti-aesthetic tenor of the movement, which repudiated ritual and ceremony;[6] at the same time he clung to the more sensuous aspects of the Indian poetic tradition. One of his earliest stories depicts a Hindu ascetic who abandons his asceticism for human love, realizing "that the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form, and the eternal freedom of the soul in love."[7] He later called this story an "introduction to the whole of my future literary work."[8]

Rabi's childhood was in some ways busy, with lessons from numerous tutors in a wide array of disciplines and the bustling atmosphere of a household devoted to the arts. He wrote a historical ballad when he was eleven, and in his teens translated *Macbeth* into Bengali. But the motherless teenage boy discovered in himself a deep fondness for isolation in the midst of nature. He later said that *Robinson Crusoe* was the best book for boys that had ever been written.[9] For some time, later on, he lived on a houseboat on the river; and the natural beauty of Bengal always charmed him. Sent to a series of schools, some in Kolkata, he left each as soon as he could persuade his father to allow him. His only degrees were the many honorary doctorates he received in later life.

Formal education based on competitive examinations and rote learning appalled him. He later wrote: "The inexpensive power to be happy, which, along with other children, I brought to this world, was being constantly worn away by friction with the brick-and-mortar arrangement of life, by monotonously mechanical habits and the customary code of respectability."[10]

Rabindranath's literary career slowly began to prosper with successes in both poetry and drama. A visit to England in 1878–1880 impressed him with the intellectual life and human generosity of the British. Used to meeting young women there without constraint, he felt saddened by his own arranged marriage with an uneducated eight-year-old girl whom he had never got to know and with whom he probably never had much in common. In a letter to his wife, Mrinalini, in 1900, he wrote: "If you and I could be comrades in all our work and in all our thoughts it would be splendid, but we cannot attain all that we desire."[11] Tagore's later preoccupation with the critique of marriage, and especially child marriage, clearly stemmed in part from his own unhappiness at the damage done to two young people by a denial of freedom and choice. This sense of tragedy was intensified soon after his marriage by the suicide in 1884 of his sister-in-law Kadambari Devi, with whom he had a very close relationship; although her death has never been fully understood, a likely contributing factor was the loss of her beloved companion, Rabi, who naturally saw much less of her after his own marriage. Mrinalini died in 1902 after bearing five surviving children; one son, Rathindranath, and two daughters, Mira and Madhurilata, survived beyond their teens. Although Tagore later had some flirtatious relationships with women, in general he remained aloof, channeling both erotic and familial passion into his school.

Meanwhile Tagore became fascinated by issues of rural development. As a landlord after his father's death in 1905 he took a keen interest in the welfare of his tenants, most of whom were Muslims. Although he enthusiastically joined an early movement to boycott foreign goods, he grew disaffected with the movement when he saw the hardships it caused for the poor, especially Muslims; one of his finest works, the novel *The Home and the World* (*Ghare Baire,* 1915), expresses that disaffection.

Both before and after his Nobel Prize in 1913, Tagore's literary

career went from strength to strength, with the publication of important short stories and novels. (He always wrote fiction and poetry in Bengali; good translations are gradually becoming available.)[12] These works often addressed social themes: the situation of women, the dangers of idolatrous nationalism.[13] The story "Letter from a Wife" (1914) is narrated by a well-off woman (the use of a female first-person narrator was itself a radical move), married in childhood, who has decided to leave her husband and become a wandering artist in order to seek personal expression and freedom. "I found myself beautiful as a free human mind," she tells him.[14] "Haimanti" (1914) depicts the slow surrender of a progressive husband to the forces of convention; while he laments the suffering of his wife (married when she was eighteen and therefore educated) under a regime of oppressive hierarchical custom, he feels powerless to challenge his family and defend her.[15] The novel *Gora* (1910) portrays the dismay of an ardent Hindu nationalist, who believes that India should be based upon ideas of racial purity, when he discovers that he is an adopted child born of Irish parents, not of Brahmin Hindu blood at all—a devastating look at the racial myth of nationhood. The play *The Institution of Fixed Beliefs* (1910) presents orthodox Hinduism allegorically as a vast lunatic asylum, where ideals and strivings toward freedom are completely absent. *The Home and the World* (1915), his critique of the goods-boycott *(swadeshi)* movement, is one of literature's finest examinations of the roots of patriotic emotion.[16] It was turned into a memorable film by the great Bengali director Satyajit Ray, who studied in Tagore's school in the 1940s and who also made a documentary about his life.

In 1901 Tagore founded the school in Santiniketan. Although today the town has the look of a charming, somewhat precious suburb, it was for a long time very rural, with the stark, sublime beauty that Rabindranath always loved. Satyajit Ray described it this way:

> A world of vast open spaces, vaulted over with a dustless sky, that on a clear night showed the constellations as no city sky could ever do. The same sky, on a clear day, could summon up in moments an awesome invasion of billowing darkness that seemed to engulf the entire universe . . . If Shantiniketan did nothing else, it induced contemplation, and a sense of wonder, in the most prosaic and earthbound of minds.[17]

It could also be lush, verdant, and filled with color. All classes were held outdoors. All the teachers lived in great simplicity in the "gurus' corner," where one can still see vestiges of the poor cottages in which wealthy and well-known men lived to join Tagore's educational experiment. The school slowly gathered an international faculty, including the distinguished Sanskritist Kshitimohan Sen, author of one of the best introductions to Hinduism,[18] whose daughter, Amita Sen (mother of the economist Amartya Sen, the only Indian since Tagore to win the Nobel Prize),[19] became one of Tagore's leading dancers, and whose two books about the school provide a moving portrait of Tagore as teacher, musician, dancer, and choreographer.[20] Although Tagore often went away from Santiniketan, his heart was always here.

Santiniketan did have standard curricular topics, and its students often performed very well on university entrance examinations. There was a strong emphasis on world history, the comparison of cultures, and the respectful study of the major world religions, often involving the enactment of ceremonies in each.[21] Reflecting Tagore's belief that one should learn about the world from the starting point of early immersion in one's own local language and culture, all instruction was in Bengali until age fourteen; thereafter English was taught as well.

What was truly radical about the school was its pedagogy (discussed further in Chapter 8). Tagore and John Dewey were exact contemporaries, and although I can find no evidence of direct communication, they were very likely aware of each other's experiments.[22] (In the 1930s Tagore's close friend Leonard Elmhirst founded the famous English progressive arts-oriented school Dartington Hall: so at least at this point Tagore had a direct influence on Anglo-American education.)[23]

Education at Santiniketan nourished the capacity to think for oneself and to become a dynamic participant in cultural and political choice rather than simply a follower of tradition. Central to this enterprise was an emphasis on imagination. The most striking feature of Amita Sen's lyrical account of the school is the way in which joy permeated the whole learning experience: joy in nature, joy in the songs to which students awoke, joy in the newfound freedom to move creatively, to imagine, to think for oneself—qualities in short supply generally, but particularly rare for women, who were usually taught to be docile "proper" followers of tradition.

The interest in freeing women remained central to Tagore until the end of his life. In a 1936 lecture he said: "All over the world women today are coming out of the confines of their households into the open arena of the world . . . Let us hope for a new age in the building of civilization." He ended the lecture with an appeal to women to "open their hearts, cultivate their intellect, pursue knowledge with determination. They have to remember that unexamined blind conservatism is opposed to creativity."[24] His understanding of this goal was unusually deep, in that he realized that accomplishing it required using the arts to forge conceptions of both masculinity and femininity, in which the playfulness of the body would be seen a key source of generous reciprocity.[25] These images of gender, based on older Hindu traditions, remain powerful countervailing forces to the images of manly aggression purveyed by the Hindu right.

In 1919 the British army, led by General Dyer, opened fire without warning or provocation on a peaceful unarmed crowd of civilians (including many women and children) at Amritsar, where they had gathered in an enclosure called Jallianwalla Bagh to conduct a peaceful protest against British injustices. When the hail of bullets began, there was no escape from the enclosure. British bullets killed 379 and wounded 1,137—a total of 1,516 casualties from 1,600 bullets. Horrified by the behavior of the British, and even more horrified when it became clear that the House of Commons wanted to congratulate Dyer rather than punish him, Tagore wrote to the viceroy of India asking to be relieved of his knighthood:

> The disproportionate severity of the punishments inflicted upon the unfortunate people and the methods of carrying them out, we are convinced, are without parallel in the history of civilized governments, barring some conspicuous exceptions, recent and remote. Considering that such treatment has been meted out to a population, disarmed and resourceless, by a power which has the most terribly efficient organization for destruction of human lives, we must strongly assert that it can claim no political expediency, far less moral justification . . . I for my part want to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings.[26]

From that time on, Tagore was securely in the camp of independence. Although he did not take an active role in the ensuing political events and was never imprisoned as Gandhi and Nehru often were, he was one of the most effective critics of the British to the world, on account of his international reputation and his previous sympathy with the British.

Like John Stuart Mill in Britain (and influenced by similar continental authors, such as Humboldt and Comte), Tagore believed that society must strive to liberate each individual from the safe shelter of tradition and to promote self-expression and self-development. Tagore did not give this idea an unrealistic, romantic cast. He knew that freedom is limited by social context, and he thought people should know their own context thoroughly—hence his students' initial education in Bengali, and a constant emphasis on local political and artistic traditions. But the individual needs space to challenge tradition, seeking within the confines of society a little room for the unique and the personal. As Tagore put it in a conversation with Albert Einstein, "There is in human affairs an element of elasticity—some freedom within a small range, which is for the expression of our personality."[27] His special interest in the situation of women was closely connected to his perception that women have typically been denied the conditions of free self-development; but he knew that men, too, often prefer to abnegate their own freedom, telling themselves (as does the young husband in "Haimanti") that they are just the agents of a traditional culture and have no choice.

Tagore's idea of freedom included emotional and imaginative, as well as scientific and rational, self-development. His ideal was not Faustian self-assertion in the midst of emptiness, but the freedom of the disciplined dancer. He believed that this idea of the free person—critical, self-critical, sympathetic, physically and mentally alive—was important not only for the personal life but also, and especially, for citizenship. True self-rule requires citizens who can think for themselves, who can imagine the situation of others, and who are continually challenging themselves by seeking examples from other cultures and other ways of life.

Tagore connected this freedom of mind very closely with an eventual end to ethnic and religious animosity:

> I have tried to save children from the vicious methods which alienate their minds, and from other prejudices which are fostered through histories, geographies, and lessons full of national prejudices . . . It will be a great future, when base passions are no longer stimulated within us, when human races come closer to one another, and when through their meeting new truths are revealed.[28]

These ideals led Tagore to his famous critique of patriotism, concerning which he and Gandhi had sharp exchanges. Tagore was both an individualist and a humanist. Although he disliked the idea of a world of uniform culture and values, he also saw moral ideals as fully universal, transcending ethnic, religious, and national differences. In a letter in 1908 he wrote: "Patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter; my refuge is humanity. I will not buy glass for the price of diamonds, and I will never allow patriotism to triumph over humanity as long as I live."[29] In a 1916 lecture on nationalism he rejected both the "colorless vagueness of cosmopolitanism" and the "fierce self-idolatry of nation-worship"—in favor of a politics of sensitive dynamic internationalism and internal pluralism.[30] Witnessing the rise of Hindu nationalism in his own time, he linked a respectful pluralism with the repudiation of nation-worship, especially worship built on ideas of blood and soil. He remarked that India had "made grave errors in setting up the boundary walls too rigidly between races . . . often she has crippled her children's minds and narrowed their lives." For centuries, however, he continued, pluralism had been on the rise, and now it was time to give it political form. India was like a hostess who had to make all her guests comfortable, however varied they were. Success in this task depended "not merely upon tactfulness but [upon] sympathy and true realization of the unity of man."[31] Humanism might lead to colorless cosmopolitanism; but if it respected the individual it would move instead in the direction of tactful and sympathetic pluralism.

These themes receive their fullest development in Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* (*Ghare Baire,* 1915). Set during the 1905 movement for the rejection of foreign goods, the novel is told in succession by its three primary figures: Nikhil, a wealthy liberal landowner; Bimala, his wife; and Sandip, a nationalist friend of Nikhil's. Nikhil is a

humanist and also something of a cosmopolitan in Tagore's pejorative sense. He believes that the repudiation of ethnic hatred and sectarian ideology requires the repudiation of all appeals to the imagination and emotions in politics, and so his ideal is rather colorless and rootless. As the only sober son of a family whose men have ruined themselves and dissipated the family fortune by drinking and sexual excess, Nikhil has gone to the opposite extreme, drinking not a drop and having what appears to be a distant and fearful attitude to sexual relations. Thus although he does express some views that Tagore himself held, he is clearly not a surrogate for the author.

Sandip, by contrast, is an ardent nationalist who believes that people can never be moved toward political goals except by images and idols. He is fundamentally a self-promoter, and something of a pseudo-Nietzschean who thinks of power over others as a display of his own strength. At the same time he is aware that his real underlying personality is rather weak and merciful, not oriented to violence or domination. He views this as a fault in himself, and he connects this fault to his Hindu Indian heritage, to a traditional style of masculinity that is sensuous and unaggressive. He compares the weakness he abhors in himself to Indian music, the crushing violence he seeks to an English "military band," and he concludes, "I want the western military style to prevail, not the Indian."[32]

The two men have opposing conceptions of the Indian nation. Sandip wholeheartedly embraces the stirring warlike song "Bande Mataram" as the sign of his politics: he and his followers love to sing the Chatterjee anthem. He believes that the Indian nation is a Hindu nation, held together by a constructed bodily image of the nation as mother of those who share her blood. For Nikhil, by contrast, a country is something to serve, not something to worship: "my worship I reserve for Right, which is far greater than my country. To worship my country as a god is to bring a curse upon it." He believes that true self-government is impossible so long as people are moved by the unthinking "hypnotic stimulus" of Sandip's appeals to emotion. Particularly odious to Nikhil are Sandip's appeals to ethnic division, which he calls the "cheap consolations of hatred." The extent of true freedom in a country can be measured by the extent and nature of people's fear: a coun-

try whose people experience fear only when they are harming others is a free country; but where the appeal to fear, especially fear of a group, motivates the core of political life, there is no longer genuine freedom. He is especially emphatic about repudiating appeals to fear of Muslims.

Where should we place Tagore in this debate? Clearly, Nikhil is meant to have the better of the argument. Nikhil assumes, however, that any politics that appeals to emotion must be a form of idolatry. Tagore plainly did not believe this; he believed that the emotions, rightly cultivated, were crucial to the joy and dynamism of a democracy and to citizens' ability to understand the situation of another.

The Home and the World is centrally a love story, and its politics is a sexual politics. Bimala, Nikhil's young wife, is happy because she is treated well by her husband (as other women in that family were not by their drunken and adulterous husbands), but it is also clear that there is little sexual warmth between the two. Nikhil has an unfortunate "lack of expressiveness"; for that reason he can "only receive" and not "impart movement."[33] For that reason, his decision that his wife should leave the traditional *purdah* and enter the outer world contains the seeds of disaster. Knowing little of life and less of passion, Bimala is an easy mark for Sandip's cheap but rhetorically effective blandishments. She falls for him, though the extent of their physical involvement is left rather vague. Nikhil's offer of freedom and reciprocity seems to Bimala too cold. Sandip, by contrast, offers to cast her as the goddess of the new nationalist movement. She does not understand until much later that to be a goddess is to be less, not more, than a human being: her own individuality is utterly submerged, and Sandip shows no concern for her as a real person. Tagore knew that there was an alternative to both Sandip and Nikhil: the politics of Santiniketan, a politics of pluralism and internationalism fueled by joy and sympathy.

The novel is particularly insightful for the way in which it associates Hindu nationalism with a particular mode of sexual self-assertion and with specific types of sexual failure. Sandip is an Indian male who sees Indian masculinity as weak and shameful.[34] He would prefer to be an English male, which he imagines as something tough and aggressive, able to take without compunction. The sexuality of idolatrous nationalism is an "English" sexuality of male force and female submission, which does not acknowledge the personhood or individuality of the woman at all: Bimala functions as merely an abstract symbol. Nikhil's cosmopolitanism is also associated with a kind of sexual failure, namely with at least metaphorical impotence, the renunciation of all sources of magic and joy within oneself. The sexuality of "vague cosmopolitanism," while it offers good principles, reciprocity and respect, and at least does no harm to Bimala, proves devoid of activity and life.[35] Bimala's tragedy is that she rightly longs both for recognition as a person and for passion, and her world offers her no choice that combines the two.

Only at the novel's end does Bimala realize that her husband was nobler than Sandip. Shot in the head, Nikhil is carried home, apparently dying. Bimala attempts to worship him, showing that she has learned little about equality in love. As he (apparently) dies (the novel's ending is unclear), Bimala becomes one more childless widow in her in-laws' house, joining the sister-in-law whose abusive husband died of drink.

The novel's dark ending contains a stern challenge to the young nation in the making: will it take the path of Sandip, pursuing ethnic conflict and an idolatrous conception of the nation as mother, singing Chatterjee's "Bande Mataram" with Sandip and Bimala? Will it pursue a pallid correctness that will prove impotent to stem the tide of hatred? Or will it find some other way to counter Sandip and his anthem, making a reality out of the fantasy embodied in Tagore's "Jana Gana Mana," that of a nation rich and joyful precisely because of its diversity, pursuing noble ethical goals with joy? This challenge is the very one that India faces still.

In many respects Tagore had ideas that steered the new democracy well, and that might have steered it more wisely, in some areas, than Gandhi's ascetic creed or Nehru's preference for science to the arts and humanities. His ideas remain marginal in today's India, however, in part through his own unwillingness to let other people implement them (see Chapter 8). India's needs for "public poetry" and for a public education focused on pluralism, critical thinking, and imagination have not been filled—except, in a pernicious way, by the Hindu right,

who have cleverly used some of Tagore's own media—music, story, and movement—to draw children out from their boring schools into a culture of hate.

Gandhi: Moralist, Ascetic, Man of Action

Mohandas K. Gandhi has been the subject of such vast discussion and such widespread veneration that even readers with little knowledge of Indian history are likely to have a reasonably accurate picture of him—especially if they have seen Richard Attenborough's excellent 1982 film, in which Ben Kingsley successfully conveyed many aspects of Gandhi's complex personality. Gandhi's *Autobiography,* subtitled *The Story of My Experiments with Truth,* is far more widely read in Europe and the United States than the autobiographical writings of Tagore and Nehru. It ranks as one of the classics of the genre.[36]

The mental picture most of us have of Gandhi is one of the emaciated ascetic figure wrapped only in a loincloth, striding along with a stick, the round bald head almost comically decorated by large protruding ears and small round spectacles. (Winston Churchill, profoundly racist, referred to him as a "half-naked fakir.")[37] This picture is not inaccurate: people who met Gandhi for the first time expressed surprise that "the Mahatma" (the Great-Souled One), as he came to be called, looked exactly the way they had expected him to look, almost like a cartoon of himself. Both Gandhi's asceticism and his identification with the dress and lifestyle of the poor were deep and important. But people who knew Gandhi well emphasize that the stock picture is in crucial ways incomplete and possibly misleading. Once people began to talk with him, other impressions supervened: his simple childlike demeanor, lacking in vanity and self-consciousness; his playfulness and charm; his capacity for humor; above all, his incredible energy of both body and character. Nehru's description is typical, if unusually eloquent:

> People who do not know Gandhiji personally and have only read his writings are apt to think that he is a priestly type, extremely puritanical, long-faced, Calvinistic, and a kill-joy . . . But . . . he is far greater than what he writes . . . He is the very opposite of the Calvinistic priestly type. His smile is delightful, his laughter infectious, and he radiates lightheartedness. There is something childlike about him which is full of charm. When he enters a room he brings a breath of fresh air with him which lightens the atmosphere.[38]

As we approach the man we must try to bear in mind that someone who knew him as well as anyone did, and who often disagreed with him, felt that his writings represent him incompletely. We must also try to understand that people who intensely disagreed with Gandhi, as Nehru did, felt, and feel, the deepest admiration and even reverence for him.

Gandhi was born in 1869 in Gujarat. His family belonged to the *bania,* or trader, caste. He was the youngest of five children. His mother was very religious and yet practical, his father "truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered."[39] As a youngster Mohandas was dutiful, but shy and a loner; he did not show early aptitude for study. At the age of thirteen (having already been betrothed several times), he was married; his wife, Kasturba, was ten. This event, which he reported having enjoyed in a childish way at the time, left a deep mark on the man in later life. He suggested that it invited him to enter a life of sexual license, which, as time went on, became connected to a desire to dominate his wife, both using her as the object of his lust and making her into an ideal wife.[40] In his insightful *Gandhi's Truth,* psychoanalyst Erik Erikson comments that there remained throughout Gandhi's marriage a deep ambivalence toward the woman who inspired passions that he came to repudiate, an element of vengeful aggression that emerged, for example, in his unilateral decision that a vow of chastity was good for the marriage, and also in his frequent condescending allusions to his wife's lack of education.[41]

Even as a boy Gandhi clearly had unusual moral sensitivity. Although for a time he took up eating meat in secret, under pressure from a friend who told him that meat was what made the British stronger than the Indians, he eventually stopped, feeling that it was intolerable to deceive his parents.[42] When he once committed a small theft (a

bit of gold out of his brother's armlet), he confessed it later in writing to his father, whose grief and nonvengeful love gave him an example of nonviolence that he said helped forge his later strategy.[43]

This beloved father died when Gandhi was in his teens. The boy nursed him faithfully during his illness, but one night he let his uncle relieve him and went to make love with his wife. Just at that moment, his father died.[44] The guilt he reported retrospectively has been much analyzed. Whether this incident shaped his attitude to sexual passion is difficult to know; certainly he told the story in a way that dramatizes the conflict between desire and love, and used it to indicate that desire must always be a source of moral blindness and lack of control.

Gandhi's religious upbringing was that of a *vaishnava* Hindu (a sect focusing on the worship of the god Vishnu), but his family gave him an example of toleration by visiting the shrines of different and hostile Hindu deities, Rama and Shiva. (He later liked to point out, to those who said that Hinduism and Islam were adversarial, that such adversarial relations between gods were well known within Hinduism and did not stop Hindus from working cooperatively.) He also had Muslim and Parsi friends. As he began to read religious texts, he developed the conviction "that morality is the basis of all things, and that truth is the substance of all morality."[45] He recalled his intense love for a poem he learned in school, which ended: "But the truly noble know all men as one, / And return with gladness good for evil done."[46]

In 1887 he traveled to England to study law, leaving his wife and baby at home. His stay in England introduced him to serious ethical discussion about vegetarianism, to Christianity, and to Tolstoy. His sense that the core of religion was moral and that all religions were one increased. He greatly admired the Sermon on the Mount and compared it with the *Bhagavad Gita*—giving both texts an already characteristic ascetic spin: "That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly."[47]

Returning to India in 1891, Gandhi set up as a lawyer near Bombay. Not finding much work there, he left for South Africa in 1893, again leaving behind his wife and now two sons. Up to this point, nothing in Gandhi's life suggested that the shy young lawyer would play a leading role in world affairs. The experience of racism in South Africa wrought a fundamental change in his self-conception and his plans for his life.

The sight of the brutal treatment of Indians and black Africans by the white community galvanized him, awakening a powerful and lasting identification with the maltreated, together with a hatred of violence, which he linked with his repudiation of his own sexual violence.[48] Working with other advocates of racial justice, he began to organize the Indian community, gradually developing the idea of nonviolent resistance and, later, the related idea of Indian self-rule. He also began to experiment with ideals of community, after being deeply influenced by John Ruskin's *Unto This Last,* with its praise of simple rural life. He set up a utopian village community called Phoenix near Johannesburg in 1904, which was succeeded by Tolstoy Farm in 1910. In 1906, without consulting his wife, he took a vow of *brahmacharya,* or sexual renunciation, which he apparently never broke. This decision, he recorded, was profoundly liberating, freeing him for the service of others.[49] While still organizing civil disobedience in South Africa, he focused increasingly on the need for India to free itself from British domination.

At this time Gandhi began to develop his theoretical ideas, publishing in 1909 the book that is still the best introduction to his thought, *Hind Swaraj,* or *Indian Self-Rule.*[50] The idea of *ahimsa,* or nonkilling, is a constituent part of the philosophy of *satyagraha,* or "truth-force," a term that Gandhi introduced only later. In *Hind Swaraj* and other early writings, Gandhi called his idea "passive resistance," but he later changed the term because he felt that "passive resistance" connoted weakness, implying that resisters were mere victims, whereas he always saw resistance as motivated by an active love of humanity and as involving enormous strength, since it takes great fortitude to renounce violence.

The essential idea of *satyagraha* is to confront one's oppressor without taking up the oppressor's weapons, with the force of justice and moral truth on one's side and with a mental attitude of love. One must understand that means and ends are not separate: the means is a seed out of which grows, like a tree, a characteristic version of the end.[51] *Satyagraha* has a demanding list of behavioral requirements: nonviolence, nonretaliation, submission to arrest, no swearing or cursing, no insults, the active protection of public officials from insult and violence, courteous behavior to prison officials, no special favors while in prison.[52]

But it involves above all an internal transformation: one must learn to wean oneself from one's own anger and aggression: one must suffer the anger of the opponent, but harbor no anger oneself.

Many people who saw *satyagraha* as a wise political strategy, which brought world attention to the Indian self-rule movement in a dignified and powerful way, never fully went along with Gandhi's renunciation of anger. Nehru, for example, continued to believe that violence could sometimes be justified, the Second World War being a prime example; Gandhi, by contrast, wrote with obsessive idealism about how Hitler and Mussolini could and must be approached with nonviolence, and that human nature "unfailingly responds to the advances of love."[53] Even this idealism, however, had about it something shrewdly practical. Gandhi understood that changing people's behavior—and seeking a dignified place for India in the world community—required not just new strategies but also new ideals. He did not break with people who disagreed, but he did supply a constant moral example.

Central to *satyagraha,* and the thing about it that captured the imaginations even of unbelievers and skeptics, was a powerful egalitarian compassion. When one fights with violence, power wins: men dominate women, higher castes dominate the lower, the British dominate India. Gandhi wanted to substitute for the rule of power a new foundation for politics: the equal dignity of all human beings. He saw that if the independence movement became a standard type of violent struggle it would leave untouched aspects of Indian life that were inimical to the creation and maintenance of a stable and morally decent democracy. Only a deep psychological revolution would pave the way for a nation in which men and women, untouchables and upper castes, all met one another on a basis of equality. Nonviolence was in that sense a practice of unity and equality, and Gandhi knew how to combine it with other such practices as he invited all to emulate his own simplicity of life and his caste-free community.

Because he held that morality was unitary and religious distinctions superficial, Gandhi's invocations of Hinduism may be regarded as strategic and instrumental, powerful and sincere though they clearly were. (Similarly strategic was his silence about Western sources of the idea of equality.) He repeatedly attacked the idea that Islam and Hinduism were fundamentally at odds on this or any other moral issue. "Religions," he wrote in *Hind Swaraj,* "are different roads converging to the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal?"[54] He also repeatedly insisted that Hindu scriptures should not be understood as divinely inspired when they taught what was contrary to moral truth, particularly where caste and the role of women in society were concerned.[55]

Gandhi's other key political concept, self-rule, also has both external and internal aspects. *Hind Swaraj* is a book about how India can achieve political independence from Britain. That was the goal for which Gandhi fought for most of his life, and he was no armchair theorist, but a deeply immersed, creative, and practical political leader. Although Nehru was the more creative and solid institutional thinker, Gandhi cared about institutions and constitutional structures. But from the beginning to the end he cared more for a transformation of soul that was in his view the deepest part of creating a viable democratic nation. Self-rule is, then, fundamentally an idea of internal freedom, the idea of not being dominated within oneself by desire; that internal nondomination is a prerequisite for the creation of a nation free from external domination. Nondomination for Gandhi was not, as it was for Tagore, a matter of rational freedom, freedom to debate, criticize, and choose. It was fundamentally a matter of learning not to need the things to which people were currently bound by their desires: and one could achieve this learning without much in the way of intellectual freedom or critical thinking.

Gandhi held that self-rule, and nonviolent resistance itself, were impossible without a bodily discipline involving renunciation: abstention from alcohol was a firm requirement of his movement, and sexual abstinence was held out as a highly desirable ideal. "Chastity is one of the greatest disciplines without which the mind cannot attain requisite firmness. A man who is unchaste loses stamina, becomes emasculated and cowardly. He whose mind is given over to animal passions is not capable of any great effort."[56] Life in cities, the use of machines,[57] doctors and hospitals, and all other forms of modern material progress were condemned as antithetical to the true concept of civilization.

Gandhi sincerely subscribed to these ideas, but he also used them strategically to gain respect for the rural poor as equals of the highest, calling his privileged political companions to a life of humble service.

Even people who ended by rejecting his antimaterialism said that they had been fundamentally changed by their effort to follow Gandhi's program, spinning their own thread, washing their own pots, living the way the poor and women lived. So great were the divisions between a prosperous Kashmiri Brahmin like Jawaharlal Nehru and a street-sweeper or a rural sharecropper that empathy would have been doomed to failure without a radical moral challenge to the prosperous to change their ways and experience the life of poverty. The most extreme aspects of Gandhi's vision thus played a crucial moral role. As Nehru wrote to his daughter from prison, "Bapu [Gandhi's intimate nickname] . . . is one of the wisest men I know. He understands and appreciates the other's viewpoint and his advice is always valuable, even if we cannot always follow it."[58]

Returning to India, Gandhi soon assumed a central role in the Congress and began to reorganize it in keeping with his ideas. Although he had been an admirer of many aspects of British culture and had sided firmly with the British during the Boer War, organizing an ambulance corps, the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 caused a break; thereafter Gandhi had a respectful yet profoundly critical relationship with all things British. He established an ideal community near Ahmedabad in his home state of Gujarat, incorporating untouchables into the group. From that base he developed nonviolent resistance both in the struggle of workers against employers and in the larger struggle of Indians for independence. His campaign of civil disobedience against British rule captured the attention of the world with the Great Salt March of 1930. In order to protest a tax levied by the British on salt, so important to the poor, he led thousands of followers on a march from his ashram in Gujarat to the seacoast 241 miles away. There he and his followers manufactured salt illegally by holding seawater in their hands and letting it evaporate in the sun. The theatricality of the event riveted and unified all India. Nehru wrote: "As we saw the abounding enthusiasm of the people and the way salt-making was spreading like a prairie fire, we felt a little abashed and ashamed for having questioned the efficacy of this method when it was first proposed by Gandhiji. And we marveled at the amazing knack of the man to impress the multitude and make it act in an organized way."[59] Arrests of Gandhi and the other participants soon followed.

Throughout the independence movement, Gandhi controlled masses of people by the force of his example—by shrewd yet high-minded political action and, when necessary, by personal fasting. By 1942 Congress had inaugurated the Quit India movement and articulated the core ideas of the future democracy under Gandhi's and Nehru's leadership. Gandhi repeatedly advocated a liberal constitution that would guarantee fundamental rights, including the freedoms of speech, press, and association; nondiscrimination on grounds of religion, caste, or sex; free primary education; and religious neutrality. Characteristically he linked these goals, so familiar to modern readers, to others that seem problematic and illiberal: prohibitions on the sale of alcohol and of foreign cloth and yarn were classified as "fundamental rights" in a typical document he prepared for the Congress.[60] Although Gandhi characteristically stressed the Hindu roots of the values he invoked, he made it crystal clear that the state must be neutral among the religions. And although he favored making Hindi India's national language, he insisted that both the Hindi script and the Urdu script should be used side by side. (Hindi and Urdu should probably be classified as different dialects of the same language, but Urdu uses the Persian script.) He deplored the rise of a militant Hinduism that was unwilling to accord full equality to Muslims.

Faced with the rise of religious tension and the catastrophic violence surrounding the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the aging leader tried once again to use fasting to bring people to their senses. Ending his fast on January 25, 1948, he said, "In the name of God we have indulged in lies, massacres of people without caring whether they were innocent or guilty, men or women, children or infants. We have indulged in abductions, forcible conversions and we have done all this shamelessly."[61] Taking a solemn vow of friendship among Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs in India and of a similar friendship toward Pakistan, he urged his followers to join him. On January 20 a bomb went off near his compound. On Friday, January 30, as he was walking to his early morning prayers, he was approached by Nathuram Godse, a well-known member of the Hindu-right organization Hindu Mahasabha and editor of a newspaper called *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). Godse shot Gandhi at point-blank range, firing three times. Gandhi called out "Hey Rama" (Oh Rama, or, as Gandhi and many

others used the locution, Oh God). He died almost immediately. Nehru spoke extemporaneously on All-India Radio:

> Friends and comrades, the light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere . . . Our beloved leader Bapu as we called him, the father of the nation, is no more . . . A madman has put an end to his life, for I can only call him mad who did it, and yet there has been enough of poison spread in this country during the past years and months and this poison has had an effect on people's minds. We must face this poison, we must root out this poison and we must face all the perils that encompass us and face them not madly or badly but rather in the way that our beloved teacher taught us to face them . . . remembering always that if, as I believe, his spirit looks upon us and sees us, nothing would displease his soul so much as to see that we have indulged in any small behavior or any violence.[62]

Godse was arrested, tried, and convicted. He admitted and defended his action, arguing that Gandhi had been too favorable to the Muslims and had adopted a policy of "appeasement." Upon conviction he read a long statement of self-justification that we shall discuss in Chapter 5. Websites are devoted to him and his "heroic" deed. Godse was hanged for the murder on November 15, 1949. Gandhi's well-known opposition to capital punishment—expressed in the famous remark (which he often made) that "an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind"—deterred neither leaders nor the public. (B. R. Ambedkar, Nehru's law minister, did offer Godse clemency, but he refused the offer.) Even today, as India, like the United States, clings to the system of capital punishment (although it uses it rarely, in exceptional cases such as this one), Godse's case is cited as an instance of its justifiable use. Surely it is a case that powerfully dramatizes the issues on both sides.

By the time of Gandhi's death, Tagore had been dead for seven years. For most of Gandhi's life, however, the two men enjoyed a close and mutually admiring relationship. They were in some ways complementary figures. Both worked for an India that was pluralistic and tolerant; both supported equal education and equal political opportunities for women. Both iconoclasts, they saw India's development as

closely linked to each individual's own mental awakening and to the criticism of much that had constituted traditional Hindu culture. Both were resolute enemies of caste.

But how different in spirit the two men were. As their common friend C. F. Andrews wrote, there was between them a "difference of temperament so wide that it was extremely difficult to arrive at a common intellectual understanding, though the moral ties of friendship remained entirely unbroken."[63] Gandhi linked the future of India to a suppression of bodily desire; Tagore linked it to an embrace of the sensuous delight of the body—not to undisciplined sensuality, but to the ordered sensuousness of dance. Gandhi thought that respect for women required an end to unnecessary sex, which he saw as a male imposition on women; he opposed contraception as a way of perpetuating the reign of desire and urged women simply to say no to their husbands. (Margaret Sanger, the famous birth control advocate, hearing Gandhi's reasoning on these issues, said, "Gandhi maintained that he knew women and was in sympathetic accord with them. Personally, after listening to him for a while, I did not believe that he had the faintest glimmering of the inner workings of a woman's heart or mind.")[64] He criticized child marriage for its connection to luxury and sensuous indulgence. Tagore thought that respect for women required allowing them to become sexual, as well as political, agents; he saw sexual puritanism as closely linked to male domination. In a poem written for Amita Sen on her marriage, Tagore described her as

> a dancing torrent
> Meeting quiet waters, immersing your playful steps
> In the deep, taking on the universe, unafraid.[65]

Gandhi would surely have characterized a young woman's entry into sexual life in more pejorative terms; indeed, he would not have encouraged Amita Sen to develop her considerable talent as a dancer. One cannot imagine Tagore opposing contraception, although I know of no writing of his on the topic; he would have viewed it as an enhancement of freedom for both men and women. And when Tagore opposed child marriage, he did so because of its denial of women's agency and freedom.

Gandhi's asceticism was bound up with a kind of moral rigidity that could be quite resistant to learning and change. Tagore, ever the critical and resourceful pragmatist, thought that one should change one's mind if experience showed a better way. Once when Gandhi was on a visit to Santiniketan, a young woman asked him to sign her autograph book. He wrote: "Never make a promise in haste. Having once made it fulfill it at the cost of your life." When Tagore saw this entry he became agitated. He added to the autograph book a poem in Bengali to the effect that nobody can be made "a prisoner forever with a chain of clay." He concluded, in English (possibly so that Gandhi could read it too), "Fling away your promise if it is found to be wrong."[66] Tagore also often criticized Gandhi's fascination with the spinning wheel and the return to simple village ways of life.

Both men were religious universalists who thought that all religions could equally lead to truth and that all religion worthy of the name called us to love of all our fellow human beings. Both saw the core of religion as moral. But Gandhi's understanding of the universal religion was very different from Tagore's. Tagore's *The Religion of Man* focused on human beings' quest for freedom—from all kinds of domination and limitation. Giving a positive interpretation to the story of eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Tagore associated freedom with progress, including scientific progress through which we better our living conditions, but also including progress toward individual self-realization through the imagination and the arts. Closely aligned with John Stuart Mill (and linked to him intellectually through Auguste Comte's idea of the "religion of humanity," which both men appropriated), Tagore thought of the progress of civilization in terms of the progressive liberation of human beings from the tyranny of both want and custom, so that each could realize his or her own creative possibilities. Gandhi, of course, rejected the idea of progress and frowned on technological advancement and the raising of living standards.

Nor was he a friend of the arts. A student of Tagore's, visiting Gandhi in 1924, posed many questions about the role of art in his moral vision.[67] Gandhi's Platonic reply was that artists were valuable only insofar as they expressed the correct moral vision. But many acclaimed artists, he continued, did not fit this description—he cited the example of Oscar Wilde. In short, Tagore's moral vision was both rationalist and Dionysian; Gandhi's was neither.

The largest public disagreement between the two men concerned the nature of patriotic politics. C. F. Andrews described to Romain Rolland a conversation between them on the topic:

> The first subject of discussion was idols; Gandhi defended them, believing the masses incapable of raising themselves immediately to abstract ideas. Tagore cannot bear to see the people eternally treated as a child. Gandhi quoted the great things achieved in Europe by the flag as an idol; Tagore found it easy to object, but Gandhi held his ground, contrasting European flags bearing eagles, etc., with his own, on which he has put a spinning wheel. The second point of discussion was nationalism, which Gandhi defended. He said that one must go through nationalism to reach internationalism, in the same way that one must go through war to reach peace.[68]

This exchange should not be oversimplified. Tagore was no enemy of emotion in politics; indeed, he understood (in the poem that later became India's national anthem and elsewhere) how to link emotions to constructive political values. Nor was he an enemy of independence. What is of concern here is something more subtle, something about idolatry and freedom. In a published exchange with Gandhi in 1921, Tagore criticized the element of submissiveness and the absence of critical freedom in Gandhi's noncooperation movement. "What I heard on every side was, that reason, and culture as well, must be closured. It was only necessary to cling to an unquestioning obedience . . . So easy is it to overpower, in the name of outside freedom, the inner freedom of man."[69] It was not emotion he objected to, but blind devotion, the spirit (as he saw it) of "Bande Mataram." Nationalism itself, if it was to be compatible with human freedom, must preserve critical freedom.

There can be no doubt that the success of democracy in India today owes an incalculable amount to Gandhi's genius for political mobilization and for the theatricalization of important moral ideals. The very strangeness of his self-presentation, as Nehru emphasized, served as a catalyst and a profoundly energizing challenge. He called both Hinduism and all Indians to a higher vision of themselves, getting people to perceive the dignity of each human being in a manner that would perhaps have been impossible without his ascetic lifestyle and the way in which he connected his moral goals to Hindu traditions. India's de-

mocracy would have remained far more deeply riven by divisions of caste and class had he not had a strange capacity for getting under the skin of the elites. When we think about the refined Kashmiri Brahmin Jawaharlal Nehru spinning thread in prison, when we picture his daughter Indira getting married in a sari made of homespun thread from her father's spinning wheel, when we visualize upper-caste judges and advocates washing their own pots after dinner in the presence of rural villagers whom they had previously despised because of their low-status occupations,[70] we see a demonstration of human equality so powerful that it began to break down centuries of mistrust, summoning the rich to a life of service and the poor to a life as equal citizens. As Nehru wrote, "It is not surprising that this astonishingly vital man, full of self-confidence and an unusual kind of power, standing for equality and freedom for each individual, but measuring all this in terms of the poorest, fascinated the masses of India and attracted them like a magnet," producing "a vast psychological revolution."[71] Few figures in human history have been capable of inspiring such devotion to moral goals, and fewer still at the same time had intelligent political policies directed toward the practical realization of those goals. (Two who more recently fit that description, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, both owe a great deal to Gandhi's example.)

Equally surprising and rare was his ability to move people in ways that redefined traditional norms of manliness and the manly political leader. Gandhi's asceticism dramatized an underlying moral principle: his renunciation of the ideal of male domination and male aggression, his pursuit of truth through an internal struggle against the forces of domination. Nonviolence, for him, went with a new conception of manliness that was profoundly androgynous. Many have emphasized his powerful self-identification as a mother, his genius for making people feel that he was caring for them in a maternal fashion. Clearly, this maternalism had deep psychological roots and was connected to a horror of his own aggressive sexual desires. In politics, however, it had a distinctly positive value, calling the dominant to identify with the weak and powerless and to refashion their own male self-image accordingly. Most political leaders who have succeeded in mobilizing people around norms of human dignity have done so while displaying traditional "macho" virtues (Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela). Far rarer (one thinks of the Buddha and of Jesus) has been the ability to show people the ugliness of domination in ways that touch the core of their sexuality itself. Among these, Gandhi may be the only one who turned these spiritual ideas into a successful program of political action.

One cannot praise these remarkable achievements, however, without noting some of their limitations. Nehru, who saw quite clearly what Gandhi had achieved by his emphasis on rural lifestyles, nonetheless rebelled against the notion that the village was an ideal for the new nation. "I do not see why a village should necessarily embody truth and non-violence," he wrote to Gandhi in 1945. "A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent."[72] For Nehru, Gandhi's village was a mental utopia, not a realistic proposal for people's lives. But Gandhi really believed that comfort was bad and that people would be more moral if they lived impoverished self-sufficient lives; that technological development, beyond a very limited point, corrupted morality; and that cities were in general a bad thing. These were not useful beliefs in shaping the future of a huge nation. Nehru puzzled over the strange paradox of a man whose central motive was compassion for the poor, and who yet insisted on idealizing, on behalf of the poor, a way of life that was profoundly oppressive.[73]

Equally paradoxical was the asceticism that lay at the heart of Gandhi's quarrel with Tagore. Seen in one way, Gandhi's vow of celibacy and his lifelong obsession with diet were shrewd devices to prompt thought about what masculinity really is and how it might be pried loose from ideas of domination. But one cannot read the *Autobiography* without feeling that Gandhi's lifelong commitment to the denial of the body was itself bound up with a certain sort of violence. In *Gandhi's Truth,* Erikson argues that even Gandhi's childlike playfulness depended on his campaign against desire: it was as if he had to rescue playfulness and intimacy in himself by cutting them off from a sexuality that offended him.[74] Erikson addresses the dead leader directly: "you should stop terrorizing yourself, and approach your own body with nonviolence."[75] Only when we can look at our own sexuality without the violence of moralistic denial, argues Erikson, will we be able to surmount the tendencies in every society toward violent domination

of others.[76] Erikson's proposal lies close to the ideal proposed by Tagore: a cultivation of both critical freedom and a joyful yet disciplined life of desire.

Nehru: The Founder

If Gandhi was the spiritual revolutionary without whom independence, and democracy, would very likely have faltered, Nehru was the statesman whose practical skill and balanced vision were needed to set the new democracy on its way. It is Nehru's legacy that hangs in the balance in today's India as voters contest the value of secular pluralistic democracy—a fact made vivid in the presence of Sonia Gandhi, widow of Rajiv Gandhi, older son of Nehru's daughter Indira, at the helm of the Congress Party. The idea of a shared duty of public service runs deep in the family, and the Gandhian imperative of simplicity is a strong part of it. When one goes to have an audience with Sonia Gandhi, one sits in a simple waiting room with no rug, a few simple cane chairs, and, on the wall, family photos: Jawaharlal, Indira, Rajiv—and the smiling face of Gandhi, as if he were still the family's presiding spirit, friend, and adviser. The tradition of simplicity and equality is demonstrated in the style in which the family receives a visitor: not trying to overawe by pomp and riches, but beckoning one in to have a shared conversation. Following Nehru's lead, well-to-do Indians, at least those of an older generation, frown on conspicuous consumption. This principled simplicity and this sense of human equality, so rare among the elites of the world, have surely played a significant role in promoting the stability of Indian democracy.

Jawaharlal Nehru's seventy-four years (1889–1964) spanned the tumultuous period of resistance against British rule, the founding of the new nation, and its first sixteen years.[77] In all these events Nehru played a leading role, interacting with figures who were as complex and historically significant as he (including Gandhi, the Muslim leader Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and his own daughter Indira, who succeeded him in power). His life and achievement are at the same time a history of the nation and a history that he himself described in memorable works. (His literary productivity is not surprising, given that he spent about ten years in various British jails.) Especially noteworthy are his huge *Autobiography*, first published in 1936 and thus covering only his early political life; and *The Discovery of India* (1944), a sweeping survey of Indian history, culture, and religion, as well as detailed commentary on British rule and the resistance to it.

Nehru, unlike Gandhi, loved literature and art unreservedly, and he became one of the supreme prose stylists in English of the twentieth century, as one can see in his will as he asks that his ashes be thrown into the river Ganges:

> Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall, a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter and a vast, roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future.[78]

He was also a master of public rhetoric, as is evident in the famous "tryst with destiny" speech (quoted extensively later in the chapter) marking the nation's independence on August 14–15, 1947.

Nehru can strike one as the normal human being in this trio of leaders, and there is truth in that impression: he acknowledged, without shame or inner violence, his loneliness, his defects of pride and inattentiveness, his many deep sorrows. He was capable of deep human love, as his relationships with his wife, his daughter, and Gandhi testify. He did not court or tolerate personal veneration, as both Tagore and Gandhi in different ways did. His political personality was psychologically complex. He was painfully self-scrutinizing, yet with an ungovernable temper; a famously urbane and delightful guest, yet rightly described by Gandhi as one of the loneliest men in India; unreservedly given to the service of others, yet aware of a powerful egotism in himself; hungry for love and connection, yet aware that "I had been, and was, a most unsatisfactory person to marry."[79]

Nehru himself acutely noted all these contradictions and failings, as when he criticized his own hunger for power in an anonymous article published in the *Modern Review* in 1937:

> [Nehru] has all the makings of a dictator in him—vast popularity, a strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organizational capacity, ability, hardness, and, with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt of the weak and inefficient. His flashes of temper are well known and even when they are controlled, the curling of the lips betrays him. His over-mastering desire to get things done, to sweep away what he dislikes and build anew, will hardly brook for long the slow processes of democracy.[80]

Given the time and his hatred of Mussolini and Hitler, this is an extraordinary self-caution, and in the end he applied it to himself, respecting the slow processes of democracy even when things he cherished were not getting done. A similar depth of self-knowledge shows in his description of his strange mixture of emotion and detachment: "I have loved life and it attracts me still and, in my own way, I seek to experience it, though many invisible barriers have grown up which surround me; but that very desire leads me to play with life, to peep over its edges, not to be a slave to it, so that we may value each other all the more."[81]

An all-too-common oversimplification of Nehru is to portray him as "Westernized" and as out of touch with "Indian traditions." Such contrasts are likely to derive from a Western denigration of Indian culture as primitive, mystical, and antirational, very common in the time of empire. Gandhi, of course, exploited such contrasts in his own freewheeling way, constructing a "Western culture" that was the repository of everything he wanted to repudiate in modernity and "Indian values" that just happened to correspond to the values that Gandhi himself had constructed. Nehru did not treat reason and science as Western phenomena. In *The Discovery of India* he rightly emphasized the richness and prominence of the rationalist traditions in Indian religion and philosophy. And in his *Autobiography* he argued cogently that the British deliberately fostered the irrationalist strands in Hindu culture and religion and inhibited the rationalistic, the more securely to dominate a people who could not industrialize on their own without scientific development.[82]

Nehru was the only son of a prosperous liberal Kashmiri Brahmin family. His father, Motilal, a lawyer, was a modernist and reformer,

comfortable with Muslims and mistrustful of all appeals to traditional religion. Motilal can indeed be described as Westernized: he required his children to study even Sanskrit texts in English translation, dressed little Jawaharlal in a sailor suit, and encouraged the use of the English nicknames "Nan" and "Betty" for his two younger daughters. (Both became women of substantial achievement; one was the first woman president of the United Nations General Assembly.) At one point in the 1890s Motilal decreed that no language other than English would be spoken in the home—despite the fact that his wife (a sickly woman, and traditionally religious) knew no English.

Not surprisingly, Jawaharlal was sent to Harrow, where he was very happy. In 1907 he went on to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he studied chemistry, geology, and physics, graduating with a mediocre second-class degree. As important as any formal education he received was his close relationship with his father, who, in person and by letter, cultivated Jawaharlal's capacity for argument, particularly on political topics. Resistance to British rule was growing, and Jawaharlal became increasingly radical in his views, ultimately influencing his moderate father to take a strong anti-British position. The Amritsar Massacre of 1919 radicalized him. When the official commission of inquiry whitewashed the conduct of General Dyer, Motilal Nehru was appointed by the Congress (already in existence as an organized social movement) to head an independent inquiry and sent his son to look into the facts. Jawaharlal's diary records meticulously what he saw: on one part of a wall he counted sixty-seven bullet marks.[83] He wrote in a newspaper article that he saw the spot where the British had forced Indians to crawl on their bellies "in the manner of snakes and worms."[84] And he saw clearly that the exonerating suggestion that General Dyer thought that there was an exit from the enclosed area through which the civilians could escape was absurd: "Any person, standing on the raised ground where he stood, could have a good view of the entire place and could see how shut in it was on all sides by houses several stories high."[85]

Taking up a career in law alongside his father, Jawaharlal soon became close to Mahatma Gandhi and a staunch supporter of the non-cooperation movement. His influence within the Congress—which had begun to organize the struggle for independence—rapidly increased. Meanwhile in 1916 he had married the seventeen-year-old Kamala

Kaul, betrothed to him by family arrangement when she was thirteen. Jawaharlal at first objected to any arranged marriage; when he yielded, he insisted that he and his betrothed should be allowed to get to know each other before marriage. The marriage, though unhappy on account of Kamala's ill health and premature death from tuberculosis in 1936, had great emotional depth. Kamala came to share Jawaharlal's passion for the cause of independence and did valuable work for it when her health permitted. The sexual bond between them appears to have been deep, and perhaps increased over time. "Though we had sometimes quarreled and grown angry with each other," he later wrote, "we kept that vital spark alight, and for each one of us life was always unfolding new adventure and giving fresh insight into each other."[86] Her death, in a sanatorium in Switzerland, was a source of tremendous grief to him—all the more because his years of imprisonment had deprived him so often of her company. Although he had affairs after her death—certainly with Sarojini Naidu's daughter Padmaja, and perhaps later with his close friend Edwina, wife of Lord Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India—he never remarried. He once wrote to Kamala from prison: "I am a traveler, limping along in the dark night. Why should I drag others into this darkness, however near or beloved they may be; why should they suffer the travails of the journey?"[87]

In the 1920s Jawaharlal became one of the leading pro-independence radicals of the Congress movement. As a result he was frequently packed off to British jails, where he made a point of occupying himself with exercise, gardening, spinning (Gandhi's influence), and, above all, reading and writing. "I became obsessed with the thought of India,"[88] he recalled. Meanwhile Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement and the Great Salt March were effectively mobilizing civil disobedience.

Nehru and Gandhi had a complex and troubled relationship. Nehru, ever the pragmatist, saw nonviolence as strategic and objected to a politics of unbending moral idealism. He also objected from the beginning to Gandhi's romantic glorification of pre-industrial society, holding that India's future well-being required scientific, industrial, and technological development. During the Second World War he and Gandhi had a serious quarrel over India's stance toward the Axis powers. Nehru hated fascism from the first. He saw it up close on visits to Europe in the 1930s, where he made a point of purchasing Jewish products. "Amazed and disgusted" by Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, he called it "the difficult and intricate game of how to betray your friend and the cause you are supposed to stand for on the highest moral grounds . . . the utter collapse, in the moment of crisis, of all the so-called advanced people and groups."[89] Summoned to a meeting with Mussolini while in Italy in 1936, he refused, despite his curiosity, unwilling to let himself be used for fascist propaganda. Gandhi's much more equivocal stance included, for a time, a willingness to support Japan if doing so would hurt the British, and a real sympathy with the renegade Indian National Army led by Subhas Chandra Bose, which actively fought the British in Burma. Nehru found this position horrifying. Nonetheless the two remained deep friends and uneasy allies until Gandhi's assassination in 1948. Gandhi understood that Nehru was a practical politician of moral courage and superb practical perception; Nehru understood that Gandhi had an unparalleled capacity to inspire people for good ends, and he was deeply moved by the man even when disagreeing with him.

The piggish racism of the British during this period almost surpasses belief. Winston Churchill was no exception. He announced: "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion," and he described Gandhi's visit to London as the "nauseating" sight of "a seditious Middle Temple Lawyer . . . striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace . . . to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."[90] Franklin Roosevelt, who was sympathetic to the cause of Indian independence, could not understand how Churchill could claim to fight on behalf of freedom while denying self-rule to India. At one point Churchill countered pressure from Roosevelt with the "fact" that 75 percent of Indian soldiers were Muslims, which showed that the "Hindu priesthood" was unfit to govern India and Indian Muslims. In reality less than 35 percent of the Indian army was Muslim. Roosevelt's continuing pressure on behalf of Indian independence made Churchill furious.[91]

If the British could not have a dependent India, they were determined to have a fragmented one. Initially Muslims played a large role in the Congress Party, and the deeply religious traditional Muslim Maulana Azad (1888–1958) was one of its most influential politicians, serving as its president from 1940 to 1946 and as minister for educa-

tion from 1947 to 1958. In early regional elections, Congress won a large proportion of votes against the recently formed Muslim League, organized along religious lines. Both Gandhi and Nehru saw the future nation as multireligious and viewed with deep alarm both the rise of Hindu-right politics in the form of the Hindu Mahasabha and the rise of Muslim separatism in the form of the Muslim League. But the British, who regarded monotheistic Islam as more "civilized" than polytheistic Hinduism, fostered the cause of Muslim separatism, initially against the wishes of the vast majority of Muslims, and supported Mohammed Ali Jinnah, the elite and highly Westernized Muslim who by then had assumed leadership of the Muslim League and demanded a Muslim state.[92] (Nehru saw similarities between Jinnah and European fascist leaders.)[93] The result was Partition and the creation of Pakistan, which occasioned horrible bloodshed on both sides. The scars of these events persist in India today. Gandhi was able in some cases to stop the violence, but his last days were deeply burdened by the catastrophe and the moral weakness it revealed.

At midnight on August 14–15, 1947, India became an independent nation. Nehru's speech marking the event became as well known among Indians as the Gettysburg Address is among Americans. In the speech Nehru linked Indian democracy closely to values of work, equality, the eradication of desperate poverty, and humanistic internationalism:

> Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom . . . It is fitting that at this solemn moment, we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. . .
>
> . . . Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons us now.
>
> That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means, the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.
>
> And so we have to labour and to work, and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace is said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.
>
> To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make an appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell.[94]

This somber address—fittingly, since it marked Partition as well as independence—sets the agenda of democracy as an uphill battle for humanity, against the forces of poverty, ignorance, and violence. At the same time, it incorporates Gandhi's optimistic maternalism, expressing the nation's birth and the pangs of partition as labor pains, the job of the new nation as that of a mother toward her weeping child. The huge gulf between the reality of present suffering and the goals of solace and peace can be bridged only by work and service.

After independence Nehru worked tirelessly to build democratic institutions and to forge a policy whose key features were secularism (meaning not separation of church and state, since four major religions were given substantial roles in lawmaking, but equal respect among the religions), a foreign policy of nonalignment and internationalism, and a socialist economic policy. (Nehru was no fan of Communism, which he criticized for its failure to protect essential freedoms of association, speech, conscience, and religious practice. In economic policy, however, he believed that state ownership of the means of production and considerable top-down planning was the best route to prosperity.) After Gandhi's death he was deprived of his most essential ally; however, his law minister, B. R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), from the group of

castes formerly called "untouchable," did outstanding work in helping Nehru cement the values of the new nation and establish a constitution that did away with untouchability and with discrimination on grounds of both caste and sex.

These policies all had their difficulties, but they succeeded remarkably well, in part thanks to Nehru's endless capacity for hard work, his high moral tone, and his absolute freedom from corruption. His own personal qualities played no small part in holding India together in the early days, and also in winning respect from the other nations of the world. If he was at times annoyingly paternalistic and given to micromanaging, there was no doubt about his selfless devotion to the nation, which he called "a fire within me."[95] The people loved him; his days, he said, consisted of "an alternation of huge crowds and intensive activity and loneliness."[96]

In the 1960s, age began to sap his famous vitality. To Indira, increasingly his political partner and confidante, he wrote: "The sense of the work to do, so little done, and ever less and less time to do it, oppresses." Despite two strokes in 1964 he quickly resumed his usual routine. On May 26 he died in his sleep of a massive aortic rupture. On his bedside table were found, copied in his own hand, these lines of Robert Frost:

> The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
> But I have promises to keep,
> And miles to go before I sleep.
> And miles to go before I sleep.

How should we assess Nehru's "invention of India"? Let us begin where he began: "My legacy to India? Hopefully, it is 400 million people capable of governing themselves."[97] India's population now tops one billion, but that legacy remains firm. The institutional structure that Nehru helped to design has withstood the test of time, and the democratic political culture he helped to forge has (so far) successfully vindicated religious pluralism against a very well-organized and dangerous threat. A key element in the vigor of India's democratic culture, strongly encouraged by Nehru, has been its strong and independent press. This freedom remains impressively robust.

Nehru's commitment to democracy and federalism has made the realization of other cherished goals slow and uncertain: changes in the status of women, in particular, central in his vision of India's future, have been slow to come because of the dominance of entrenched traditional ideas. Only on August 29, 2005, did Hindu women win fully equal property and inheritance rights; other inequalities remain in areas such as divorce and maintenance.[98] Nonetheless, Nehru's patience with the slow building of real democracy was right and Indira's later impatience, as she pushed through her policies by attempted suspension of constitutional freedoms, was wrong. But Nehru's reluctance to transform Congress from a freedom movement into a genuine political party, one among others, has left India without flourishing national parties. Instead regional and caste-based parties have balkanized the political process, entrenching divisions that Nehru rightly wished to eliminate.

As for the economy, it is all too easy to make the hindsight judgment that Nehru relied too much on centralized planning—although even such critics at least give him credit for the progress India made in heavy industry and for impressive economic growth in the early years. The failure of centralized planning, more than any other single factor, explains the low esteem in which many businesspeople hold Nehru and Congress today. Nehru, however, was always an empiricist, committed to following the evidence where it led. He combined this commitment with an equal commitment to ameliorating rural poverty. This combination suggests, in today's circumstances, economic reform with a strong social safety net, the policy currently being followed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

In foreign policy, Nehru's policy of nonalignment during the Cold War reflected his sympathy with socialism, which blinded him to some of the evils of Soviet rule (with the result that he refused to protest the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956) and led him to take a rosier view of India-China relations than was realistic. On the other hand, he showed admirable strength in standing up to attempts by the United States, China, and the U.S.S.R. to make India a pawn in their power games. His idea was that India should take the side of the right (as he saw it), whatever, in a particular case, that side was. His courageous internationalism, in a world that had not yet come to terms with the ideal

of global cooperation, offers a moving model for an era in which that ideal is again being increasingly called into question.

In matters of religion, Nehru, like Gandhi, saw India as a tolerant pluralist nation, according all citizens and all religions equal respect before the law. This vision continues to provide inspiration, and the structures he designed continue to provide guidance and protection. But Nehru, skeptical about Gandhi's attempt to give politics a religious foundation, took religion far too lightly. Nehru thought that science was the way of thinking for the future; he found religion a "terrible burden" that India had to get rid of if it was to "breathe freely or do anything useful."[99] Some ascribe this stance to his Western education, but that view underestimates the depth of religion in the West and of rationalism in Indian religious traditions.

Nehru's feeling that religion was an embarrassment led him to devote too little attention to molding the aspects of human life that he associated with religion—emotion, rhetoric, the imaginative undergirding of a pluralistic civic culture—in such a way that civic culture could become a grassroots force for pluralism and respect rather than for fear and hatred. Thus the Hindu right encountered no opposition as it worked at the grassroots level, creating a masterful program of indoctrination that has spread the gospel of anti-Muslim fear to every region. Although Nehru emphasized that Hinduism is historically the most pluralistic and tolerant of religions,[100] he failed to follow Gandhi's efforts to build a universalistic "religion of humanity" that could help remove barriers of caste and faith. An even better example—since Gandhi himself may have stressed the Hindu nature of India more than is compatible with a truly respectful pluralism—would have been that of Tagore, with his humanistic "religion" of human freedom and the creative spirit.

The influence of Marxism may have been a major factor behind Nehru's failure to create a public culture of equal respect that could hold people's emotions and hopes and fears. Nehru greatly loved the people of India, but he wrote about them in classic Marxist terms, using words like "the mass" and "the masses." Despite his acuity in describing his own emotions, he treated "the mass" as a proletarian class without personal histories, a faceless entity that would somehow be-

have like an unindividuated amalgam, rising and flourishing as such. This theoretical view inevitably obscured the reality of what people feel in their hearts.[101] He evidently viewed his own fondness for poetry and the humanities as an elitist vestige requiring apology, not as something he could reasonably commend to the people as a whole or use as a foundation for public education.[102] Much though he admired Gandhi, he never fully comprehended Gandhi's project of providing a religious foundation for politics; much though he revered Tagore, he never understood that the liberal state needs public poetry, not just scientific rationality, to sustain itself.[103]

He did not see, in short, what Tagore and Gandhi saw very clearly: that each human being of every caste, creed, and class, is a separate person, with fear and longing and hope and the need to come to terms with death, the end of love, and the limitations of desire. If he had understood this, he would perhaps have understood, too, that the people of India, each and every one, needed what he needed, poetry and music and mourning and love, whether in a religious or nonreligious form—and also what he tried hard not to need, a group of like-minded friends with whom to share poetry and music and mourning and love. The Hindu right understands this very well.

These limitations in Nehru's imagination of humanity explain, as well, his failure to create a system of public education that would provide robust underpinnings for a democratic political culture. India does splendidly in scientific and technological education, because that is what Nehru cared about and fostered. In other areas crucial for citizenship, such as critical thinking, history, and the arts, there are large deficits.

For all his blind spots and failings, however, Nehru's is a staggering achievement, the creation of (or at least the major role in the creation of) a basically thriving pluralistic democracy, the largest democracy in the world, a democracy committed to a vision of global justice and global interdependence, as well as to the fostering of decent conditions for all the citizens of India. So far, this democracy has grappled with enormous tensions and unparalleled diversity without losing its basic commitments to pluralism and the rule of law. Where Nehru's vision has gaps and defects, he himself was the first to acknowledge that his

task was both shared and ongoing. The Epilogue to the *Autobiography* bears this epigraph from the Talmud: "We are enjoined to labour; but it is not granted to us to complete our labours."

Legacies

Looking at the history of the Indian independence struggle through the careers of these three great "founders," we can begin to understand how this democracy has managed to sustain itself despite the varied pressures and threats mounted against it. India has had to contend with its history of colonial subjugation and the poverty that British rule did nothing to ameliorate, and in many ways reinforced. But it has also had the good fortune to have, and the good judgment to choose, leaders who have put an ethical vision ahead of the politics of mere advantage and domination—an ethical vision focused on human dignity and equality, key values for a pluralistic, rights-respecting democracy. Pakistan has been far less fortunate.

In Tagore, the embryonic nation had a charismatic public poet who articulated a "religion of man" that included all regions and religions and who created, even if he did not disseminate, an educational model highly appropriate to the formation of citizens who respect differences. In Gandhi, it had one of history's greatest geniuses of political mobilization, and, among these, the morally best one, with his deep insights into how human dignity and equality could become more than a set of words on paper. With his uncanny knack for political theater and his personal charisma, he transformed the ways in which privileged Indians thought about and behaved in relation to their impoverished countrymen. In Nehru, the new democracy had a statesman who combined a firm commitment to dignity and equality with sound institutional and political instincts, personal incorruptibility, and a passion for work. Nehru's institutional insight, Gandhi's sense of moral purpose, and Tagore's emotional connection of political freedom to personal joy and to an education based on the cultivation of imagination are profound and powerful legacies.

Despite the founders' committed opposition to religious violence, they proved unable to remove tensions that would generate violence in

the future. At Partition, only Gandhi's personal presence or his decision to fast until the violence ended proved effective against the forces of religious hatred fueled by British policies and by Hindu and Muslim extremists. After his death Nehru devoted himself to providing constitutional and institutional protections for vulnerable minorities. But Nehru's blind spot concerning the psychology of "the masses" prevented him from shaping a political culture able to withstand and transcend onslaughts by forces of intolerance. He ignored the nation's need for the legacy of Tagore—for a public education that would nourish critical freedom, and for a public poetry of humanity that would use art, emotion, and the humanities to craft a pluralistic public culture. In place of this legacy, the Hindu right went to work at the grassroots level, crafting a public culture of exclusion and hate.

4 A Democracy of Pluralism, Respect, Equality

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:
JUSTICE, economic and political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity
and to promote among them all
FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;
IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

PREAMBLE, *The Constitution of India*

The Framers' Legacy

Nehru's vision of India emphasized democracy, religious neutrality (equal political standing for all citizens, regardless of religion), and economic justice. But ideals need institutions to sustain them. Now, therefore, we must turn to more abstract matters of legal and constitutional structure.

What happened in the streets of Gujarat seems far removed from issues of constitutional design. Laws and institutions, however, establish the basic terms on which people live together, often with a large influ-

ence on attitudes and behavior. India's democracy has proven resilient and relatively stable in large part because of the way in which Nehru, Law Minister B. R. Ambedkar, and their fellow framers translated ideals into institutional structures. Nehru's failure to acknowledge the importance of religion and emotion in civil society was to a great extent offset by the well-designed governmental framework he helped to institute, which on the whole has protected religious freedom very well. India's model of constitutional government has withstood some severe crises; it has been a paradigm for other nations in the developing world, such as Bangladesh and South Africa. With its separation of powers, its combination of parliamentary government with entrenched protection for fundamental rights, its limited but crucial role for judicial review, and its embrace of federalism and local control, the Constitution has given flesh to abstract ideas of citizen equality and respect for religious freedom.

The framers, however, did not solve every problem. Their admirable and, at the time, necessary commitment to affirmative action to aid the lower castes and women has led to a balkanization of politics, which the BJP exploits to its advantage, and to the entrenchment of caste as a social issue rather than to its disappearance. Their equally understandable and perhaps contextually justifiable decision to permit religious systems of "personal law" in the areas of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and property has led to no end of tensions and difficulties as each religion seeks to flex its muscle by resisting reform, particularly in the area of sex equality. These two areas of difficulty have fueled opposition to Nehru's legacy, aiding the rise of the Hindu right. In some ways devices to render religious freedom and equality more secure, they have in the long run indirectly fueled religious tensions.

The Constitution of India, ratified in 1950, establishes a liberal parliamentary democracy. Its Parliament has two houses, modeled to some extent on those of the British Parliament. The Lok Sabha (House of the People) is the main legislative body; its members are elected by popular vote. Over the years, despite India's low literacy rates—currently around 65 percent for men and 50 percent for women—voter turnout has been remarkably high, usually around 60 to 65 percent in national elections. Election procedures make it easy to vote without reading: one marks the symbol of the party for which one is voting. De-

spite terrible roads and other difficulties of access to the polls, rural voters are vigorous and enthusiastic participants, coming to polling places on foot, elephants, bicycles, mopeds. The Constitution specifies that the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha should be recalculated after each decennial census. The upper house is called the Rajya Sabha (Council of the States). Like Britain's House of Lords, it is a primarily deliberative body with little direct involvement in legislation. Its members are chosen by the legislative assemblies of the states (and sometimes by the president).

As in most nations with a parliamentary system, the executive branch consists of a prime minister, chosen by the dominant party or coalition; the Cabinet and its various ministries (ministers being chosen by the prime minister); and a president, whose powers are largely symbolic. The president is elected by both houses of Parliament, as are the legislatures of the states, according to a complicated population-weighted voting system.

The structure of government specified is federal, with many powers reserved to the states. Each state has a chief minister, who in turn has a cabinet; state legislatures are popularly elected. Over time a distribution of powers has evolved, certain issues being state issues and others being entrusted to the federal level. (This separation goes back to the 1935 Government of India Act.) Health and education are two central domains of state power.

The Constitution also provides for a Supreme Court, with a chief justice and (initially) no more than seven other justices. Now there are twenty-five others, who do not all sit simultaneously. (The position of chief justice turns over rapidly. Because each chief justice is entitled to a nice house on retirement, an effort is made to give the position to people on the verge of retirement.) Because the justices hear cases in panels, conflicts of interpretation often occur, and there is no mechanism for resolving them. The Constitution also establishes high courts, one in each state; their functions combine elements of the U.S. state supreme courts and federal appellate courts. High courts often consider constitutional questions, but their decisions are subject to review by the Supreme Court.

The justices of the Supreme Court were initially appointed by the president, in consultation with the sitting justices and the justices of the

various state high courts. In 1992 the procedure was changed: the Supreme Court ruled that it would play the central role in appointments. A committee of the most senior justices now handles the selection process. This change was originally designed to protect judicial independence from political pressures, but it is not ideal. Advocates for women's equality and other progressive legal thinkers have criticized the justices' selections for their narrow and undemocratic character. The Court's same 1992 decision also holds that seniority among high court judges is a key qualification for initial appointment to the Supreme Court, a procedure that strongly disadvantages women, since at present few women have sufficient judicial seniority to be considered. The first woman was appointed to the Supreme Court only in 1987, and typically there is at most a single token female justice (Justice Ruma Pal retired in June 2006, and both new members are male). The first Supreme Court Justice from the *dalit* community was appointed only in 2000. In 2000 a crucial sex equality case pertaining to Muslim women was heard by a panel consisting of five judges, none of whom was a woman and none of whom belonged to a minority community (including the Muslim community).

The selection procedure is also under fire from another quarter. When the BJP led the government, it announced a plan to create a national commission for the appointment of judges. Most people saw in this move a desire to compromise judicial independence, but since the proposal never got off the ground its nature remains unclear.

The role of the Supreme Court has evolved in the direction of greater authority and independence. Nehru feared that a conservative judiciary might frustrate progressive social goals, such as the reform of the quasi-feudal system of land tenure, under which vast numbers of citizens worked as sharecroppers for landlords, without any land rights of their own. He therefore favored parliamentary sovereignty and a limited role for the Court. He thought that the Constitution should be amendable by a simple majority, and that is still the system in force with respect to many aspects of the Constitution. (It is thus not surprising that the Indian Constitution has had over eighty amendments in fifty years.) In order to protect his policies of land reform from being blocked by the courts, he quickly succeeded in amending the Constitution to exempt these property laws from judicial review. Nonetheless, he also accepted

a system in which the Supreme Court is the ultimate interpreter of the Fundamental Rights that form Section III of the Constitution.

A struggle over the status of the Fundamental Rights has been waged on and off since independence. At first the Court, as Nehru predicted, took a conservative role, attempting to protect existing property rights against legislative proposals for land reform. Later, under Indira Gandhi's autocratic rule, the struggle took on a different character, with the Court intervening to defend liberal rights against an increasingly authoritarian state.

The primary focus of the struggle was the amending power of Parliament. In 1967, in a case called *Golak Nath,*[1] the Supreme Court held that the Fundamental Rights could be amended only by a new constituent assembly (akin to a constitutional congress), not by majority vote of Parliament. Parliament soon responded by passing the Twenty-fourth Amendment, which made the Fundamental Rights amendable by Parliament. In 1973, in a famous case called *Keshavananda Bharati,*[2] the Court upheld Parliament and reversed *Golak Nath;* it also limited Parliament's authority to propose amendments. Amendments that attack the Constitution's "essential features" or "basic structure" (for example, the holding of fair and free elections) would automatically be held unconstitutional. This new concept of a distinction between the "essential features" and the rest of the Constitution went against Nehru's original plan, which gave much more authority to majority vote. But in fact the Court's move proved crucial for the very survival of democracy in India.

In June 1975 Indira Gandhi declared what she called the Emergency. Indira was a populist. Vastly admired and loved, by many even adored, she was governing with a strong parliamentary majority. But she did not trust the slow, rights-protective processes that her father had laid down. Anxious and rather authoritarian in personality—traits that biographer Katherine Frank connects with her early shyness and her feeling that the male world of political discussion excluded her—she wanted more power than democracy would allow her. When some of her ambitious plans for combatting poverty and population growth began to prove unpopular, she became contemptuous of democracy itself. Trusting her scheming and manipulative son Sanjay instead of politicians who had been popularly elected—and trusting Sanjay, always, more than the decent and openhearted Rajiv (even as schoolboys the two had opposite reputations, one for clever malice and the other for undistinguished but likable good character)—she put Sanjay in charge of population control, with horrific results, including huge numbers of forced sterilizations, sometimes through a process of abduction and detention. (Rohinton Mistry's grim novel *Such a Long Journey* gives a fairly accurate picture of the times, focusing on a group of lower-class characters in Bombay who have a representative set of horrible experiences, including summary arrest, razing of slum dwellings, and forced sterilization.)

Faced with mounting opposition, Indira began to crack down on her critics. Declaring a state of emergency on June 26, 1975, she arrested hundreds of political opponents. These included many student leaders, including some who are today's leaders of the Hindu right. Arun Jaitley, law minister under the recent BJP government, was a leader of the RSS at his university, and went to jail. This background makes their opposition to the Congress Party understandable. Having jailed opponents in Parliament, in the ministries, and even in the civil service, Indira then purged the Supreme Court to remove her opponents there. She next tried to override the doctrine of "essential features" laid down in *Keshavananda* by pressuring Parliament to adopt the Forty-second Amendment, a sweeping fifty-nine-clause document that asserted unlimited sovereignty for Parliament, abolished judicial review, and subordinated the Fundamental Rights to parliamentary action. The amendment, tantamount to a new Constitution, was accepted by a Parliament intimidated by arrests of leading members and by widespread censorship.

When Mrs. Gandhi allowed free elections in 1977, she was repudiated at the polls. The new government restored the independence of the judiciary and declared unconstitutional the portions of the Forty-second Amendment that tampered with "essential features." Subsequent Supreme Court decisions have held that the *Keshavananda* idea of "essential features" includes the rule of law, secularism (meaning state neutrality toward religions), federalism, free and fair elections, the Fundamental Rights, and judicial review itself. The separation of powers envisaged by Nehru has been strengthened by the collision with near disaster.

Minorities have used one significant feature of the Constitution with great success. Article 32 creates a remedy for nonenforcement of rights, according to which citizens may appeal directly by petition to the Supreme Court to secure their rights and the Court may issue writs, directions, and orders designed to secure enforcement. Of course the Court hears only a tiny fraction of the petitions it receives; but this arrangement gives the Court power to intervene when other arms of government have not protected citizens' rights. This remedy has been used effectively by women demanding enforcement of laws against rape and sexual harassment and, as we saw, by the victims of Gujarat seeking redress against a state government that was impeding the prosecution of malefactors.

Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles

Constitutions do many things in liberal democracies. Typically they set up the nation's basic governmental structure, define offices and establish electoral procedures, and describe the role of the national government in relation to the functions left to the constituent states. But one of their most crucial functions, like a thread woven through many of their provisions, is the protection of vulnerable minorities against the tyranny of majorities. A constitution is unlike legislation: fundamental rights are typically entrenched beyond the reach of simple majority vote. Amending procedures may be more or less cumbersome in different nations, but in all liberal democracies the constitution, or at least a significant part of it, is difficult and time-consuming to amend. Hasty panics or political enthusiasms cannot directly affect the fundamental rights and privileges of all citizens.

Thus a written constitution can play a critical role in a democracy, since democracy is not simply about majority voting; it is, more fundamentally, about respect for each and every person. While giving majority voting a certain role in the scheme of daily political life, a wise democracy identifies certain commitments that express the deepest aspirations of the nation for its citizens, and then entrenches those beyond majority vote, guaranteeing them to each and every citizen.

A written constitution is not necessary for establishing these protections, but it is very useful. Britain, which has a common-law tradition but no written constitution or Bill of Rights, has been prone to panics of various kinds, involving the suspension of fundamental rights of citizens. For example, political defendants in Northern Ireland have been denied the fundamental right against self-incrimination in criminal testimony. Laws passed by the majority party have drastically limited the freedom of publishers and of the press in dealing with material potentially involving national security interests. Local libraries have been told by Parliament that they may not have books that represent the family in a way that Mrs. Thatcher and her Tory colleagues found disagreeable. A poll tax was even proposed, in a way that gravely limited the equal worth of the right to vote. All these laws would very likely be unconstitutional under most modern democratic constitutions. India deliberately chose a path unlike that of Britain, and like that of the United States, when it established a distinct section of the Constitution to set forth certain fundamental rights. Although at first it made these all too easy to amend, that defect was remedied after the Emergency.

The Indian Constitution is a model for other nations of the developing world in the care with which it makes the fundamental rights of citizens, and their equality, explicit. Article 14 establishes the fundamental principles of "equality before the law" and "the equal protection of the laws." Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, case, sex, or place of birth. That much is not unusual among modern constitutions; but in addition, and most unusually, the article also explicitly guarantees that these nondiscrimination provisions are not to be understood to prevent the state from "making any special provisions" for women and children and for "the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes." Article 16 explicitly guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment, once again affirming the commitment to nondiscrimination on grounds of religion, caste, and so forth, and the commitment to the permissibility of affirmative action. Article 17 abolishes "untouchability" and any disabilities arising out of it. Article 21 states: "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law," a provision that by now has had a long interpretive history and has come to include an idea of human dignity.

Religious liberty and the equality of citizens on grounds of religion

are protected in the articles discussed above. But they are also given explicit protection in Article 25, with its detailed defense of the freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion; in Article 26, with its defense of the freedom of religions to manage their affairs; in Article 27, with its insistence (similar to Madison's in the debate over assessment in Virginia) that no person shall be forced to pay taxes for the support of any particular religion; in Article 28, with its protection of the freedom to attend religious schools; in Article 29, with its protection of nondiscrimination in education; and in Article 30, with its protection of the rights of minorities to establish educational institutions. Indeed, religious freedom and equality receive more detailed attention and protection in the Indian Constitution than they do in any other constitution known to me. This is not surprising, since religious tensions were very much on the minds of the framers.[3]

In addition to the section of the Constitution dealing with the Fundamental Rights, there is a section titled "Directive Principles of State Policy," which embodies various long-term aspirations for the new nation that are not thought to be immediately enforceable. This creative idea has been much admired by other nations because it permits a new nation to work gradually toward some cherished goals, announcing these publicly and solemnly, while not yet putting into the enforceable part of the document a provision that cannot be enforced in present conditions (something that might bring the whole document into discredit). In fact, however, the Directive Principles have proven a kind of no-man's land, with no teeth, and so most of their force has been felt only when there is a serious struggle to translate one or more of them into binding law. The Directive Principles include many matters relating to economic issues and education rights. But the education provision proved impotent until it was transferred to the Fundamental Rights section of the document in 2002.

The most contentious part of the Directive Principles has been Article 44: "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." This article reflects a disagreement at the time of the founding. The British had made commercial and criminal law uniform throughout India, but they left matters of property, inheritance, succession, marriage, divorce, and other related areas of "personal" or family law to be regulated by the four major religions (Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and Christian). Many of the framers wanted to do away with those systems at the time of independence, but they encountered resistance from religious leaders and groups. Putting the aspiration for a Uniform Code into the Directive Principles was their way of tabling the controversy without resolving it.

Federalism, Local Self-Rule

Many crucial areas of national political life are managed by the governments of the individual states rather than at the federal level. This decentralization of functions leads to tremendous variety in arrangements. Thus the state of Kerala, despite its overall poverty, provides an unusually high quality of health services, and its life expectancy equals that in Harlem in New York City—not a good achievement for the rich United States, but an impressive one for a very poor Indian state. Kerala has also successfully promoted attention to women's equal entitlements to life and health.[4] Indian states show striking discrepancies in the sex ratio, a good indication of whether males and females get equal nutrition and health care. On average, there are 92 women to 100 men in India, as of the 1990 census, the lowest such ratio in history. The expected sex ratio, if women and men are given equal nutrition and health care, is approximately 102 women to 100 men; that ratio obtains in Kerala.[5] Clearly, provision of health services to the poor by the state can counter (in combination with other factors) the powerful ideologies and incentives (such as the high cost of dowry for the family of a daughter) that impede women's equality.[6] Even the recent rapid rise in sex-selective abortion has influenced states like Kerala, with its centrally managed health care system, far less than states with weaker systems of provision and control.[7]

Equally important are regional discrepancies in education. Children in India have very unequal chances of getting an adequate education or even of becoming literate at all. Inequalities in education are major sources of political and economic inequality between classes, between women and men—and also between members of different religious groups, Muslims having, on the whole, less access to decent education than Hindus.[8] Once again, however, good state government makes a

difference: Kerala, though relatively poor, has an adolescent literacy rate of 99 percent in both sexes. Kerala aggressively combats illiteracy through a combination of incentives to poor parents to send their children to school (for example, a nutritious school lunch), flexible school hours for working children, and a general social focus on literacy. States that attend only to economic growth and expect that this by itself will deliver benefits in the area of education do not have nearly so good a record.

From the earliest days of the republic, education has been recognized as a constitutional issue. The Directive Principles state (in Article 41): "The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance." Article 45 specifies that "the State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of Ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." And Article 46 stipulates that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." These goals were not realized within the time specified in Article 45. Most states have regulations making education compulsory, usually up to the age of fourteen, but these laws are not effectively enforced; in some rural areas schools exist only at a great distance and there is no effective transportation. The laws do not impose any duty on the state to provide satisfactory educational facilities. In addition, although state schools are supposedly free of charge, they charge fees for school uniforms, for transportation, and for examinations, thus putting education out of reach for many poor parents.

In 1992, in *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka,* the Supreme Court held that the right to education has the status of a Fundamental Right, and thus belongs in the enforceable Part III of the Constitution rather than in the unenforceable Part IV.[9] The justices argued that rights enumerated elsewhere in the Constitution could not be effectively enjoyed unless a citizen was educated and conscious of his or her individual dignity. They also appealed to the right to life contained in Article 21, which had already been interpreted to mean the right to a life with dignity. In 1993, in *Unnikrishnan J. P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh,* the Supreme Court took a further step, holding that the right to education means that "(a) every child/citizen of this country has a right to free education until he completes the age of 14 years; (b) after a child/citizen completes 14 years, his right to education is circumscribed by the economic capacity of the state and its development. The right to education flows directly from the right to life and is related to the dignity of the individual."[10]

Implementing these decisions, the Eighty-third Amendment to the Constitution was introduced in 1997 and finally passed in 2002. The amendment inserts Article 21A into the Constitution, giving education the status of a Fundamental Right. (Thus the right is located within the right to life with dignity, as a further specification of that right.) The amendment provides for "free and compulsory education to all citizens of the age six to fourteen years." It is to be "enforced in such manner as the state may, by law, determine." A financial memorandum appended to the bill created a fund for implementation over a five-year period. The Supreme Court later held, in a most creative decision, that the system of nutritious free school lunches that had long been in force in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu (another southern state) was mandatory for schools in all states, since it was a linchpin of the effort to get parents of working children to be willing to send them to school.[11] The Court further stipulated that the school lunch must contain a minimum of 300 calories and 8 to 12 grams of protein.

These developments in education demonstrate a trend to tighten the loose federal approach by setting minimum standards when matters that lie at the core of equal citizenship are involved. The system preserves the creative potential of federalism, with states as laboratories of social experiment, while setting thresholds beneath which they may not fall. Much the same thing needs to happen with teacher attendance and other aspects of education, where local control has led to neglect. On the other hand, in the massive attempt to "saffronize" education under the recent BJP government, local control was a barrier to sweeping changes for the worse.

More generally, state control makes it possible to see clearly which development policies work and which do not. Policies that focus on economic growth alone (in, for example, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh)

have not produced good results in areas such as health and education.[12] States (such as Kerala) that take aggressive direct action in those areas do better there, even if their overall economic policies are not successful. In this way, Indian federalism has enormous epistemic value for a democracy committed to human well-being. The next step is to create political conditions for development-friendly politics to be enacted in states that have so far chosen differently.

The Constitution also creates a further layer of local self-government, establishing *panchayats*, or rural village councils. At the time of independence, there was considerable controversy about how much constitutional support the traditional local councils should receive. Ambedkar, skeptical of the tendency to romanticize rural self-rule, opposed constitutionalizing their role. Others, following Gandhi, saw *panchayati raj* (village council rule), meaning the general system of decentralization and rural self-rule, as a crucial element in the empowerment of the Indian people. On account of this controversy, the *panchayati raj* system was placed among the (aspirational, unenforceable) Directive Principles of State Policy. Accordingly, Article 40 stipulates that "the State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government."

Forty years later, reflection on the continued illiteracy and disempowerment of rural people led to a renewed interest in fostering governmental decentralization and self-rule. Using John Stuart Mill's argument that local government is a school of political participation and skill, national legislators amended the Constitution to give formal legal status to the system of *panchayats*. The Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments, passed in 1992, spell out the structure of the system in considerable detail. By the time these amendments were drafted, leading advocates of women's progress had come to support reserved legislative seats for women. Thus these amendments include a complex rotation system of 33 percent reserved seats for women in the different levels and departments of the *panchayati raj* system.

Initially advocates for women were split about the merits of this scheme. Many feared that the women selected would simply be proxies for male interests. But more than a decade of experience with the scheme has shown that, on balance, its merits outweigh its drawbacks.

Certainly in some cases women do initially function as proxies of their husbands or fathers. But even these women learn political skills in the process. Some have won election to unreserved seats after the expiration of their first term, in some cases when contesting the seat against a male relative. The extension of political power to poor and illiterate women has been dramatic. Studies show that a majority of women who serve in the *panchayats* are illiterate or barely literate. Moreover, approximately 40 percent of female representatives come from families with income below the poverty line. Women report many obstacles to their effective participation, including harassment and the threat of violence. Nonetheless, the evidence is that women are participating in decisionmaking in a way that would not have been possible without the amendments. In addition, the system has increased demands for female education: women can now say that their daughters should go to school in order to prepare themselves for their political role.

Clearly, the *panchayat* system has proven a key institution in empowering rural voters in general, women in particular. In the elections of May 2004 the thoughtfulness and empowerment of the rural poor proved central in delivering to India a government that is committed not only to a decent living standard for the poor but also to the continuation of religious pluralism.

Substantive Equality, Affirmative Action

The framers had a difficult assignment: to construct a nation of equal citizens out of groups that had previously been ranked in rigid hierarchies, involving both denigration and material oppression. The caste hierarchy was a central target, especially untouchability. Equally important, however, in the view of both Nehru and Ambedkar (himself formerly an untouchable, who later converted to Buddhism), was the equality of women. How, they asked, might constitutional law contribute to the undoing of centuries of unequal status and opportunity?

In the first place, the Fundamental Rights were deliberately drafted so as to emphasize the importance of equality and nondiscrimination. Article 14 says that the state shall not deny to any person "equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws." Article 15 prohibits

state discrimination "on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them." Other rights that are highly relevant to equality are protected in Article 13 (invalidating all laws inconsistent with the Fundamental Rights); Article 16 (equality of opportunity in public employment); Article 17 (abolition of untouchability); Article 18 (abolition of titles); Article 19 (protecting freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, freedom of travel, freedom of residence, and freedom to form labor unions for all citizens); Article 21 (stating that no citizen shall be deprived of life or liberty "except according to procedure established by law"); Article 23 (prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labor); and Article 25 (freedom of conscience and religion).

But it is one thing to announce that citizens are equal before the law and that longstanding hierarchies have been removed; it is quite another to make such changes reality, especially in a context in which traditional religion still supports inequality. As legal scholar Marc Galanter puts it, "India embraced equality as a cardinal value against a background of elaborate, valued, and clearly perceived inequalities. Her constitutional policies to offset these proceeded from an awareness of the entrenched and cumulative nature of group inequalities."[13] The framers understood that longstanding discrimination could be changed only by aggressive social measures, and they wanted to make sure that the new Constitution was understood to be compatible with such measures. The concept of equality in the Constitution was therefore explicitly aimed at securing substantive equality for previously subordinated groups, and was designed to ward off merely formal understandings of equality that have been used elsewhere to oppose affirmative action.

Substantive equality is not defined, but the Directive Principles give a great deal of attention to economic equality, and the Fundamental Rights are specified so as to make room for affirmative action programs for women and the lower castes. The notion of formal equality that is carefully avoided is the notion that equality requires treating everyone the same, and not using race or sex as a basis for any type of differential treatment, including affirmative action. Thus, Article 15 states that "nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children" and that "nothing in this article . . . shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes." Similar clauses appear in Article 16 (equality of opportunity in public employment) and in Article 19 (a long list of other specific liberties).

This approach grows out of a long Indian tradition (extending back to the early twentieth century) that strongly favors quotas and other affirmative action measures for deprived groups. From the founding on, quotas in public employment, in higher education, and in the legislature were introduced for the scheduled castes and tribes. Quotas (the Indian term is "reservations") for women were debated but not adopted, although much later they were adopted at the level of the local village councils or *panchayats*. A bill to establish quotas for women in the national legislature has long been debated but has never passed, in part because lower-caste politicians oppose it on the grounds that the women who would be chosen would be likely to come from elite castes. The baroque solution of quotas within quotas has been proposed but has won little support.

In addition to the formerly so-called untouchables (the preferred term today is *dalits*) and tribal peoples, the Constitution mentions "other socially and educationally backward classes." Defining such classes and introducing remedies for their situation has been a very contentious matter. In 1980 the Mandal report on the status of the "backward classes" supported sweeping quotas in public employment for a wide range of "Other Backward Classes" (known as OBCs), which were subsequently introduced.[14] The commission used caste as a key idea in analyzing the notion of social backwardness, thus focusing the inquiry on Hindus alone and virtually ignoring economic tests of deprivation. Although the commissioners were well aware that most of the benefits under the new scheme would go to the most economically and educationally advantaged people in these groups, they did not seem troubled by the feature (later removed, to some extent, by the intervention of the Supreme Court).[15]

New sets of quotas make some things better, giving castes near the bottom of the hierarchy advantages similar to those of the "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes." But they create other difficulties. The more quotas are introduced, the more glaring the omission of Muslims from the quota system becomes. Muslims are a particularly impover-

ished group in today's India, and they have been targets of discrimination ever since independence. And while the reluctance to introduce a quota for them stems in part from an understandable reaction against the British proposal to have separate electorates for Muslims, rather than treating them as parts of the same nation, it is still hard to justify, given the ongoing and increasingly severe discrimination that Muslims face. Similarly, Christians in the south are typically very poor, and they too are unrepresented in the quota system. So the quota system can seem like a way of locking in increasing numbers of jobs for Hindus.

More generally, the intention of the founders—to use reservations temporarily in order to rectify the most glaring injustices, but then to let them expire—has long since been disregarded. Once-temporary quotas have become politically unremovable, and new ones have been added. Their addition has given rise, in turn, to plausible arguments for introducing yet others (for women and possibly for other economically deprived groups).

Although only the scheduled castes and tribes have official quotas in the legislature, the growing recognition of caste as an organizing principle in society has led to an increasing mobilization of politics along caste lines. The Congress Party has never quite known how to function as one party among others. Its dual history as party and independence movement has made it reluctant to tolerate or even encourage other national parties organized along straight political lines. Only the Communists have been an ongoing source of politically grounded opposition, and their power has been strong only in Kerala and in West Bengal. The BJP has to some extent emerged as an alternative national party, but it derives its support in part from its religious roots, not only from its political values (difficult though it is to separate the two). In the meantime, many smaller regional parties have emerged, often organized along caste lines. These parties and their leaders are often tremendously popular with economically deprived voters, who find it exhilarating to see one of their own taking center stage in national politics.

Consider the career of Laloo Prasad Yadav. The Yadavs are a socially "backward" caste, and Laloo, who is reputed to have an outstanding education and to speak excellent English, usually presents himself as a rough rural "Robin Hood" figure, a champion of the oppressed.

Despite convictions for corruption and time spent in jail (during which his wife, Rabri Devi, assumed the role of head of state), he was Bihar's chief minister for some years,[16] and his caste-based party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (National People's Party), was its dominant party. Meanwhile, since Laloo was a longtime opponent of anti-Muslim politics and a staunch supporter of pluralism, he was elevated to the cabinet post of railways minister in May 2004 by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and party chief Sonia Gandhi. He played a leading role in the investigative report on the Godhra train incident.

Laloo's caste-based party is a major force in national elections, as are other such parties around the country. Meanwhile, as a result of his personal corruption, Bihar remains in a hopelessly backward condition. Education is in disarray. Roads are virtually impassable. Bandits attack the vehicles who do get through. Laloo himself sends emissaries to hold people up on the roads, taking their money and even announcing, "We are from Laloo." One activist I know was even given a receipt so that she would not be accosted another time very soon. Laloo has appealing features, his tough-minded opposition to the politics of religious hatred being first among them. He has at times assumed personal risk to stop religious violence in his state, and he even imprisoned BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani to prevent him from using Bihar as a launching pad for the politics of hatred during his famous national campaign (known as a *rath yatra*) to drum up support for the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya. But Laloo is not the sort of leader who will make life better for the impoverished, and the politics of caste have permitted his shortcomings to escape the censure they deserve, at least until recently. In the election of March 2005 he did much less well than previously, losing many Muslim votes to the Congress Party candidate, but his party still had the largest number of seats of any single party; finally, in November 2005 he lost the chief ministership to Nitish Kumar of the Janata Dal (United) Party, which formed an alliance with the BJP. Laloo's hold on state power has ended, for the time being at least, although it is too soon to say whether good governance will ensue.

The proliferation of caste-based and regional parties has other problems: it means that the outcome of national elections is frequently determined by coalition politics based on dealmaking rather than on any real solidarity in policy. Jayalalitha, the autocratic and controversial

leader of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, has played power games with both sides for years, parlaying her position into one of huge national influence—which she has used in sometimes lawless ways, persecuting journalists who disagree with her and engaging in other questionable endeavors. (Malini Parthasarathy, part owner and former executive editor of *The Hindu*, southern India's leading newspaper, found her home ransacked after strong criticism of Jayalalitha, and escaped being arrested only by fleeing into the neighboring state of Karnataka.) Whether Laloo deserves a major Cabinet appointment might also be disputed—although he has so far performed decently in that role. All in all, it does not seem good for politics that deals need to be struck with individuals who are primarily interested in personal power, rather than with parties held together by program and policy.

The Hindu right has seized on this situation, portraying its cause as one of restoring to Indian politics a desirable unity and coherence. Devendra Swarup even blames the current state of things on the original Constitution, which carved out a role for affirmative action: "you see that this constitution has brought in . . . weaknesses. First, it is divisive in its nature. Caste and regional loyalties have been accentuated so it has led to the fragmentation of the polity . . . this system has diluted the all-India nationalism and has strengthened caste and regional loyalties that we have inherited from our own history."[17] Although the Mandal Commission greatly accentuated the role of caste in social life, Swarup is correct in saying that the Constitution itself paved the way for this development, far though it was from what the original framers foresaw or intended. Arun Shourie is more guarded: rather than blaming the current balkanization of politics on the Constitution, he says only that "politicians are trying to divide Hindu society on caste lines for votes, and I would think that this is the first task for social reform. The thing that we have to get over for purposes of social, political reform and national identity is to dissolve, finish castes, which is a big problem."[18] Caste, he argues, was on the way out because of modernization, but politics has now brought it back to center stage.

Without quotas, there can be little doubt that ongoing prejudice would have made it virtually impossible for members of the lowest castes to make progress in politics and public employment. Extreme stigmatization calls for tough measures to protect equality of association. So the original intention of the framers is difficult to fault, and their insistence on substantive rather than formal equality seems wise. But any quota system introduces dangers. Quotas are far easier to introduce than they are to remove, and they invite proliferation as other groups plausibly claim similar disadvantages. Perhaps things went especially wrong after the Mandal report, when caste, rather than economic status, was selected as the key axis of affirmative action policy. By now it is clear that the role of caste in political life has destabilized politics. This situation, to some extent exacerbated by Congress's desire to be all things to all people, rather than one policy-driven party among others, has over time played into the hands of the Hindu right, as many people are drawn to the BJP by a longing for a politics of policy rather than one of identity.

The Problem of the "Personal Laws"

Although the Constitution protects sex equality, nondiscrimination, and free choice of religion, it also retains plural systems of religious personal law (Muslim, Hindu, Parsi, and Christian), which cause problems for all three of these norms. These systems govern property law, as well as family law (marriage and divorce, maintenance, custody, and so on). The systems themselves have a variety of origins. Islamic law was established in India at least by the thirteenth century. (India's various Muslim rulers left Hindus to be governed by their own customary laws except in criminal matters.) Under the British Raj Islamic law was simply made more uniform. By contrast, the whole enterprise of codifying the previously informal and regionally diverse systems of Hindu law was a British enterprise, and Hindu law bears many marks of Victorian British law. In 1864 the Parsis (Zoroastrians) won the right to be governed by their own separate system of personal law. Christians have been governed by a plurality of distinct systems of Christian personal law, reflecting the different national origins of Indian Christianity. (For example, until recently Catholic Christians in Goa were still governed by the Portuguese Civil Code.) Jews never had a codified system of personal law; in matters of succession they were governed by the (secular) Indian Succession Act of 1865, and are currently governed by its post-

independence successor.[19] Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains are considered Hindus for legal purposes.

Why did the British not only permit this decentralization but actively encourage it (by codifying Hindu law)? The needs of empire clearly required uniform codes of criminal and commercial law, but it seemed possible in other areas to allow subjects a limited sphere of autonomy. The British very likely saw this as a way of ceding to the subject people a sphere of power, centrally including the power of husbands over wives and children, that would partially satisfy male subjects and thus diminish the likelihood of rebellion.[20] They also may have felt that sheer divergence among the religions was an ally of empire; "divide and rule" was a common British strategy. A more positive story might also be told: in this way, the British at least allowed Indians to settle on their own definitions of property, marriage, and the like, rather than foisting on them definitions that might have invalidated their own arrangements, as happened with the aboriginal people in Australia. Certainly by the 1930s Indians were active in legal reform, particularly focusing on women's property rights and other issues of concern to women.[21]

At independence many framers favored a "Uniform Civil Code," but some religious leaders opposed it. Despite this opposition, the framers were determined to enact sweeping reforms in Hindu practice, particularly in relation to "untouchability," which was forbidden in the Constitution, and also in relation to matters such as marital age and consent. Religious freedom was therefore carefully specified in a way that left room for limitation of that freedom by the state.[22] Nonetheless, Hindus were still permitted to keep traditional Hindu laws in many areas. Other minorities were given a similar independence. For some Muslims, this was an important issue. Although many Muslims favored a Uniform Code, some feared that such a code would make them second-class citizens: "Uniform Code" would be bound to mean "Hindu Code." This danger seemed especially great in the wake of Partition. The antiquity and dignity of the Muslim system meant a lot to Muslims. It was not like the Hindu code, which was in many respects an artifact of British legal engineering; it had a distinctively Muslim history. Thus its removal would have had strongly negative symbolic value for at least some Muslims. The nonsolution of placing the

aspiration for a Uniform Code in the Directive Principles shelved the problem for the time being, leaving the personal codes in place.

The systems operate in different ways. None is completely independent of the central government. Parliament as a whole must pass the legislation creating a particular system of marriage law or property law, although these laws will apply only to a specific religious community. But their internal operations vary. In the case of Muslim law, the Ulema (a body of leading clerics) has had considerable power in shaping the legislation that allows Islamic norms to govern specific aspects of citizens' lives. The Muslim Personal Law Board, a self-perpetuating and unelected body consisting of leading clerics, is the primary "representative" of the community that is always consulted when legal change is contemplated. Its arbitrary claim to authority is a source of frustration to Muslim feminists and other Muslim liberals. By contrast, because Hinduism is the majority religion, Hindu law is debated (and reformed) at the national level. Christians and Parsis never made their own legislation autonomously, but were legislated for by the British (after consultation with at least some parts of the community). Christian law of marriage, divorce, and custody is uniform, but Christian property law was allowed to remain decentralized, and remains so.

When a child is born, it is immediately classified by religion and thereafter comes under that religion's legal system. It is possible to elect a secular identity for a child, and there are secular laws of marriage and divorce. But because ancestral property is governed by the system of religious law to which one's ancestors belonged, and in the case of Hindus is held in complex family consortia or "coparcenaries" from which individual shares cannot always be detached, it is actually very difficult to extricate oneself from a religious system, whether in order to change religion or in order to elect a secular identity. Thus the system creates large difficulties for the free exercise of religion and for freedoms of proselytization and conversion that have explicit constitutional protection.

India's system is thus, in effect, a system of plural religious establishment, unusual among the systems of personal law in today's world in that property law is included along with family law. This system has many of the difficulties that have long been identified in discussions of religious establishment. One potential difficulty, that of discrimination

against those who are omitted, does not appear to be severe. Jews and other nonestablished minorities, governed by secular laws of marriage, divorce, and property, do not seem to have suffered particular disadvantages as a result; indeed, they escape some of the severe difficulties inherent in the slow bureaucratic workings of establishment.

By leaving the personal laws in place, however, the framers created some serious problems, including difficulties for religious freedom, for nondiscrimination on grounds of religion (because one may lose or gain by the luck of being born into one religion rather than another), for the status of Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs (who have no power within the Hindu system in which they are classified), and, above all, for women's equality. Women receive attractive promises under the Constitution, which guarantees them not only nondiscrimination but also equality before the law. One might have thought that laws involving discrimination against women would be unconstitutional under these provisions, in combination with the Thirteenth Amendment, which declares that all "laws in force" that contradict the Fundamental Rights are null and void. And yet, early in the life of the republic, the Fundamental Rights were held by the Supreme Court not to apply to the personal laws, so that personal laws that discriminated against women or treated them as unequal before the law could remain in effect.[23] Until 1999 there was no change in this situation.[24] Thus proponents of sex equality must address equality issues within each separate religious system, and feminists have persistently sought to do so, with varying success.

All religions in India have had such discriminatory laws, and all still have some. Male clerics tend to view resistance to changes in these laws as a test of their strength relative to other religions. The cumbersome system under which religious bodies must first agree among themselves and then move Parliament has made reform remarkably slow even when it has widespread support. Consider the fact that Christian women obtained the right to divorce on grounds of cruelty only in 2001, many years after Christian women in most nations with a substantial Christian population had obtained that right. Similarly, prior to a legal case decided in 1986, whose plaintiff was novelist Arundhati Roy's mother (then a poor working woman), daughters of Syrian Christians in Kerala inherited only one-fourth of an estate, and sons inherited three-fourths.[25]

These problems are serious; they must eventually be solved. Their relation to the status of vulnerable minorities is, however, complex. Muslims and Christians do not have affirmative action programs in areas such as politics and employment. What they do have is the right to have their own personal laws, and thus the right to carry on their own affairs under state protection. For a time, during the 1970s and 1980s, support for a Uniform Code was growing, and many Muslims supported it. The backlash occasioned by the *Shah Bano* judgment, to be described shortly, began to reverse that trend. More recently, the rise to power of the BJP and that party's repeated call for a Uniform Civil Code have politicized the issue, causing backpedaling among liberals who favored uniformity, since they believe that the BJP means "Hindu code." There is little likelihood that a Uniform Code will be achieved any time soon.

One relatively successful example of internal reform involves the Christian law of marriage and divorce. Before 1995 Christian women in India could get a divorce only on grounds of both adultery and cruelty; for men, adultery alone was sufficient. This law was challenged before several state high courts. In 1995, in two similar cases, the Kerala High Court declared the relevant provisions of the law unconstitutional.[26] As a result of a lengthy reform process, in 2001 Parliament passed the Christian Marriage Bill, which both equalizes and liberalizes the grounds for divorce, allowing divorce by mutual consent for men and women. Problems remain, but this case shows that reform can take place, especially as a result of pressure applied by the courts.

The most famous constitutional conflict over personal laws concerns the Muslim system of maintenance. Muslim men are able to divorce their wives summarily, by simply pronouncing the word "*talaq*" three times. (This is not the religiously preferred course under Hanafi interpretation: it is preferable for the husband to allow a month between each declaration of "*talaq*," thus avoiding divorce in the heat of anger. Most actual Muslim divorces in India do not involve hasty action, but take place after couples have long been living apart.)[27] Under Muslim law women were entitled to claim only the dowry, or *mehr*, that they had brought into the marriage. Because this arrangement left many Muslim women in desperate circumstances, women had found a remedy through the Criminal Code. Section 125 of the code forbids a man "of adequate means" to permit various close relatives, including (by

special amendment in 1973) an ex-wife, to remain in a state of "destitution and vagrancy." Many women divorced under Muslim law had won maintenance under this section; the recognition of ex-wives as "relations" was introduced explicitly for this purpose.

In Madhya Pradesh (in central India) in 1978, an elderly Muslim woman named Shah Bano was thrown out of her home by her husband, a prosperous lawyer, after forty-four years of marriage.[28] (The occasion was a quarrel over inheritance between the children of Shah Bano and the children of the husband's other wife.)[29] As required by Islamic law, he returned her original marriage portion, 3,000 rupees (about 75 dollars by today's exchange rates). Following what was by then a common practice, she applied for relief under Section 125. The case reached the Supreme Court.[30] Deciding in Shah Bano's favor and awarding her maintenance of 180 rupees per month (about 4 dollars), Chief Justice Chandrachud, a Hindu, wrote a lengthy opinion in which he criticized traditional Islamic practices and even ventured interpretations of sacred Islamic texts to demonstrate that the maintenance was consistent with Islamic law (as had been denied by the husband in his appeal). The case was not decided on constitutional grounds, and the first sentence of the opinion stated: "This appeal does not involve any questions of constitutional importance." Nonetheless, the opinion raised constitutional issues, criticizing the whole system of personal laws, regretting that a Uniform Code had not been adopted, and recommending that the state do away with personal laws even without the consent of the Muslim community. The rhetoric of the opinion was unfortunate: for example, the chief justice cited an outdated British commentary on the Quran in support of the proposition that the "fatal point in Islam is the degradation of woman."

The tone and content of this opinion understandably produced a negative reaction. Up to this time there had been broad support among Muslims for sex equality and even for a Uniform Civil Code. But now much of the Muslim community, feeling its honor slighted and its civic position threatened, rallied round the cause of denying women maintenance. Women were barely consulted when statements were made about what Indian Muslims wished and thought; the Ulema sought to create the impression that all Muslims disagreed with the judgment. Shah Bano herself was pressured to recant her views; in a statement signed with her thumbprint, she stated that she now understood that her salvation in the next world depended on not pressing her demand for maintenance.

Meanwhile the Ulema persuaded the government of Rajiv Gandhi to introduce a law, the Muslim Women's (Protection after Divorce) Act of 1986, which deprived all Muslim women of the opportunity to win maintenance under the Criminal Code. This law was passed by Parliament. The government never consulted other segments of the Muslim community; it treated the Ulema as the voice of the whole community. Muslim women and many Muslim men expressed outrage. The law created large problems not only for sex equality but also for nondiscrimination on grounds of religion: Muslim women were the only ones who were denied the usual remedy under the Criminal Code.

In retrospect it is clear that the system of personal laws created a legal and social morass. Does this outcome mean that it should not have been allowed to continue in the first place? To have replaced the existing systems of personal law with a Uniform Civil Code would have solved and prevented many problems. But it would also, given the times, have sent a signal of inferior status to the Muslim community in particular, no matter how neutral and how carefully framed the Uniform Code might have been. Yet perhaps that risk should have been run, since in the long run the system, with its inequalities, has given the Hindu right an excuse to denounce, on not implausible grounds, the whole system established by the Constitution. Devendra Swarup refers to the personal laws as "part of the Islamic problem," by which he means that Muslims hold themselves apart from others and don't want to live on terms of commonality and equality. Swarup understands, and stresses, that the separate systems of law were created and fostered by the British; but he can also use them to argue that "Muslim separatism" is something that lies deep in India's Muslim community. The chief justice's opinion in the *Shah Bano* case is another example of the denigrating perceptions of Muslims to which the system has given rise.

More generally, there is an unfortunate tendency in today's India to speak as if Islam is committed to the inequality of women and that the poor conditions in which many Muslim women live can be blamed on their religion. This idea is easy to circulate in a world keenly aware of the repression of women in some Islamic countries (for example,

Afghanistan under the Taliban, Saudi Arabia) and largely unaware of the strong feminist policies of Bangladesh, a predominantly Islamic democracy, or of the grossly unequal condition of India's Christian and Hindu women. Many sensitive observers of India believe that the most important differences in women's status are regional rather than religious, since Hindus and Muslims in a given region have similar achievements.[31] Now we have solid evidence that India's Muslim women are not unusually repressed. In 2004 an ambitious statistical study of Muslim women in India showed that they suffer from many disadvantages in areas such as education, employment, and general welfare. But these disadvantages do not arise from religion as such: "The MWS [Muslim Women's Survey] findings . . . demonstrate that religion per se does not influence the status of women, even though there are community-specific disadvantages which arise out of poverty; social and economic class, urban or rural residence, and regional factors are far more important."[32] Where law is concerned, all the religious system have substantial inequities; social practices often maintain inequality even where law has made progress. Complaints about the Muslim system of maintenance should be joined to complaints about Christian divorce and Hindu, Christian, and Muslim land tenure or about Hindu practices regarding child marriage and the treatment of widows.[33] And yet the plural system, problematic in itself, has given politicians and right-wing groups an excuse to vilify Muslims.

What can be done at this point, in today's polarized atmosphere? In September 2001 a major decision concerning Muslim divorce was handed down in *Danial Latifi v. Union of India.*[34] In response to a petition from Latifi (a leading Muslim liberal) and others, asking that the Muslim Women's Act be declared unconstitutional on grounds of sex equality, the Court delivered a complicated judgment. On the one hand, the opinion says that if the law really did mean to give Muslim women rights on divorce that were unequal to those that other Indian women obtained under the Criminal Procedure Code, the law would be unconstitutional on grounds of nondiscrimination, equality before the law, and the rights of all citizens to a life with human dignity (Articles 14, 15, and 21). But the justices did not find the law unconstitutional. Instead they cited the familiar principle that if an interpretation can be found that makes a statute constitutional, then that interpretation should be chosen. They then found that the law was not unconstitutional, because there is a way of interpreting it that does not give Muslim women unequal rights.

The details of the proposed interpretation are baroque and more than a little strained, with the Court seeking to establish that the statute may be read as saying more or less the opposite of what it appears to say. (The fact that the Muslim Women's Bill is very badly drafted made the Court's task easier.) In the process, the Court introduced two very interesting further interpretive principles. First, statutes must always be interpreted in the light of current social conditions, which in this case prominently include the social problem of male domination. Second, "Solutions to . . . societal problems of universal magnitude pertaining to horizons of basic human rights, culture, dignity and decency of life and dictates of necessity in the pursuit of social justice should be invariably left to be decided on considerations other than religion or religious faith or beliefs or national, sectarian, racial or communal constraints."

This opinion represents a balanced and reasonable solution to the problem of personal laws in today's India. On the one hand, the system of plural establishment is respected, up to a point. There is no aggressive attempt to undo every aspect of the personal law system. Indeed, throughout the opinion the views of leaders of the religious community are treated with respect. On the other hand, the religions' area of control is now sharply bounded: it must not affect basic rights or matters of basic justice and human dignity, and this protected sphere is understood to include the matter of sex equality, religious equality, and, generally, equality before the laws and a right to life with human dignity (thus, Articles 14, 15, and 21).[35]

The system of personal laws has many severe problems. Unfortunately but predictably, male leaders in each religion tend to define their prestige in terms of how far they can resist changes in their religious traditions; the position of women has become a focal point for this resistance. Moreover, even when internal reform is successful, as in the case of the Christian Marriage Bill, the cumbersome nature of the arrangement creates huge delays and uncertainties for its implementation. Nonetheless, it is possible that internal reform, combined with creative judicial interventions as in *Latifi,* is the best option for the

foreseeable future. In this situation, the state should press much harder for sex equality as a nonnegotiable feature of each religious system through consultation with the minority communities, seeking, in the process, the opinions not simply of self-appointed male leaders of communities but of all the members and groups within each community.

One step that would greatly help in addressing both the religious freedom problem and the sex equality problem would be the creation of a genuinely comprehensive secular code of civil law, uniform for all India, and the protection of exit options from the religious systems to that code for women (and men) who want to elect a secular identity, including protection for their property rights. The combination of some such strategy with internal reform is increasingly supported by liberal legal scholars.

The problem of personal laws is an institutional problem. As with other issues, however, the vigor of public debate and the high level of public awareness give India tremendous advantages in solving its internal problems. In particular, India's women's movement, on principle organized along multiethnic and multireligious lines, has an energy and creativity that has contributed to the strength of India's democracy in major ways. The women's movement has not won every struggle, but its ceaseless activism on issues of property, maintenance, and divorce has pushed through reforms that at first looked impossibly distant. Although it is common in the United States to think with a condescending kind of pity of the lot of women in developing nations, India's women's movement has a great deal to teach America's rather academicized women's movement, as academics form creative partnerships with both government and nongovernmental organizations, and as poor and illiterate women derive energy from the knowledge that they can ask powerful academics for help in their struggle. The new quotas for women in the *panchayats* further energize democracy at the grassroots level, giving even illiterate women a direct influence over governmental decisions.

India's Constitution was written late enough that the framers could learn from the mistakes of others. In many ways the institutions they created were well designed: separation of powers, judicial review, federalism, and the explicit list of Fundamental Rights have all proven both

helpful and stable. On several issues where flaws in the original design became apparent, the constitutional design has proven capable of self-correction. The doctrine of "basic features" now protects the Fundamental Rights from majority tyranny. The *panchayat* system strengthens local self-government. The impotence of the Directive Principles in the area of education was corrected by making the right to free compulsory primary and secondary education a justifiable Fundamental Right. But the problems surrounding quotas and the personal laws remain tenacious. Decisions that seemed wise at the time and that, even in retrospect, still seem defensible have led down the road to severe problems, which contribute to the destabilization of democracy. These problems have been exploited by the Hindu right in its rise to power.

5 The Rise of the Hindu Right

To remain weak is the most heinous sin in this world.

M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*

Games

It is 1992 in Nagpur, a city in the western state of Maharashtra. We see a group of very appealing little boys—high-energy, full of mischief, surprisingly polite. They meet on a playing field for games and instruction, supervised by three young men in their twenties, instructors of the local RSS *shakha*, or "branch." All the boys agree that they like coming to the *shakha*. "It's fun," says one of the older boys, age around eleven. "They teach you manners and to play games, and they teach you to respect your parents." A little boy, around six, says, "I also like it. I come here, I play games, and then I go home." Kali, nine years old, the central figure in Lalit Vachani's film *The Boy in a Branch* (1992), a dreamy boy with large dark eyes, says, "I like the branch. It helps you to improve your character. It teaches you to respect your father and mother." Why did he join the branch, asks the filmmaker? "Sir," he replies, "one day I was just looking, and I said, 'Why shouldn't I go and play too?' So I joined." Kali adds that he is bored at school. (Later we see why, watching a dismal rote-learning exercise, conducted in English, in which an expressionless and arrogant teacher asks kids to recite facts, with no sense of life or engagement.) With great high spirits, the boys play a game in a circle: in turn, each boy runs around the out-

side of the circle, shouting, as loudly as possible, "Victory to Mother India!"

In 1992 there were 33,000 RSS *shakhas* in India. All over the country, but particularly in the northern and western states, the organization has quietly laid down firm roots through discipline, energy, and concerted grassroots work. The philosophy of the *shakhas* is both simple and sophisticated: lure boys in with fun and games, and gradually insert into the games the essential values of the RSS: discipline, obedience, and the idea that the future of India depends on unity among Hindus and the marginalization of alien groups. Movement architect M. S. Golwalkar compares the strategy to that of a man who wants to get a peacock to visit his garden regularly. He gives the peacock food mixed with opium. Soon it is addicted, and it returns every day.[1]

So too in this local branch: boys have so much fun that they don't mind learning what the teachers want to teach. Lalit, the most appealing of the three instructors—possibly because of his sense of humor and a certain lightness of touch—observes, "You can teach a lot of things to young kids, like what the RSS is about, the problems facing the nation, and those created by the Congress Party. So you have to tell them many things." They begin, he says, by playing a lot of tiring games to get the boys ready for control. Then they tell them, "You come here to learn obedience. If you're obedient, you'll have a brighter future." We see the boys playing increasingly combative games: "The Cockfight," which is "about learning to beat the other guy"; "Dhapa," in which, says one six-year-old, "someone comes and you hit him"; and Kali's favorite game, "The Organization Has Strength," in which "you have to run fast and it develops your voice."

Later the boys turn to politics. "Whom does Kashmir belong to?" ask the instructors. "To us," shout the boys, giggling. "Whom does Kashmir belong to?" "To us," they shout louder. And should a temple to Ram be built at Ayodhya, displacing the mosque that currently stands there? "Yes," says one boy, "it should be built and there should be unity. There shouldn't be a mosque there." "The Muslims already have a mosque," adds another boy. Kali agrees that the temple should be built, "because we are united in this, we worship the Lord" (that is, Rama). Already they have learned about a unity that excludes.

We now see one of the instructors take the oath of RSS membership

and loyalty. Clad in the usual uniform of shirt, khaki shorts, and cap, standing in line with other similarly clad, he says, "I take the oath that I will always protect the purity of Hindu religion, and the purity of Hindu culture, for the supreme progress of the Hindu nation. I have become a component of the RSS. I will do the work of the RSS with utmost sincerity and unselfishness and with all my body, soul, and resources. And I will keep this vow for as long as I live. Victory to Mother India." Together the young men raise the saffron flag that the RSS prefers to the tricolor national flag. "We worship the saffron flag as our guru," they say. "We bow before you, we are prepared to serve your cause." Life, death, it's all one to me, says Sripad, the most dogmatic of the young instructors. "And anyone who works for the RSS would say the same." At the end of the day the boys hear, in awe-filled silence, the story of a six-year-old boy who committed suicide for the sake of his *shakha*.

In science fiction, evil characters are almost always ugly, or become ugly when they become evil. When Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader, he immediately gets a burned and hideous face that has to be hidden under that famous black helmet. But bad acts are the products of ordinary people and ordinary forces in human life: peer pressure, gradual indoctrination, submissiveness to authority, fun and games. These little boys in the *shakha* are shocking precisely because they are so young and so cute. They don't look anything like one's mental image of the Hitler Jugend; they have a bodily looseness and flexibility, in their open-neck shirts, that one imagines the Hitler boys lacking, and a gleam of improvisatory mischief in their eyes. What makes the RSS a daunting force in Indian political life is its ability to lure boys like Kali, boys bored in school and longing for fun and games, and to bind them together into a potential killing force.

What is the desired end product? We see it when we are shown large masses of men with khaki shorts and caps, carrying long sticks over their shoulders, marching along in what is almost a goose step on their way to a huge quasi-fascist rally that whips up violent sentiments around the issue of the temple at Ayodhya. The aim is to unify India under the saffron flag, a symbol of Hindu power deriving from the reign of Shivaji, an eighteenth-century Hindu prince who conducted a brief rebellion against the Muslim empire—to declare India a nation

unified by a single culture and a holy land that is at the same time the motherland. The RSS substitutes this flag for the national tricolor of saffron (standing for courage), white (purity and truth), and green (faith and fertility), with the "wheel of law," an ancient Hindu and Buddhist symbol, displayed at its center. Nehru stated that this flag was a symbol of freedom not only for India, but for all peoples of the world. Thus the RSS iconology downplays truth, fertility, law, and the freedom of all the world's peoples in favor of a single-minded focus on courage. For devotees, every day concludes with the singing of Chatterjee's "Bande Mataram."

The RSS is possibly the most successful fascist movement in any contemporary democracy. Its success is all the more extraordinary since, as its leaders point out in Vachani's film, they do not rely, as did Germany and Italy, on the presence of powerful state sanctions to secure conformity. All they have, says Mohan Baghwat, a local RSS secretary, is "affection for each other and empathy for the nation's problems." How, then, did they succeed in founding an organization that has spawned an entire family of organizations, including one of India's leading political parties?

The Founders

The RSS was founded in 1925 under the leadership of Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (1889–1940), a man whom the movement still treats with enormous reverence.[2] "From his early childhood until his very last, his life burned like a steady lamp in the cause of the motherland," writes the movement's second famous leader, M. S. Golwalkar.[3] For the founding of the organization, Hedgewar chose the traditional day on which Rama defeated his opponent Ravana, representative of cosmic evil and otherness. In search of a social force that could unify the emerging nation under a Hindu identity, Hedgewar decided to focus on boys, more malleable than adults. He chose for the new organization the name Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, "National Corps of Volunteers." (He rejected the name "Hindu Corps of Volunteers" on the grounds that this name would suggest that the Hindus were only one part of a larger national identity. The U.S. affiliate of the RSS does use

the rejected name, presumably acknowledging that Hindus are only one part of the United States.)

The RSS refuses to consider itself a political party, reasoning that any political party can be only one part of a democratic nation, and could never unite the whole.[4] It portrays itself as a social movement dedicated to unifying the nation under the idea of Hindu purity. Thus it has come both to support and largely to control the allied political party, BJP, but it insists on its separate and allegedly more inclusive identity. In the early days it was at odds with another, more political organization, the Hindu Mahasabha. Unlike that group, the RSS shunned publicity and went to work quietly, organizing.

From the beginning, however, it has embraced some political values and shunned others. Hedgewar was emphatic in his rejection of Gandhi's politics of nonviolence and Gandhi's willingness to cooperate with Muslims in the anti-British struggle. Nonviolence seemed to RSS leaders a useless philosophy that only reinforced tendencies to subservience, disunity, and weakness that had hobbled Hindus throughout history. And cooperation with Muslims would prove fatal to the project of reestablishing Hindu pride: "Only Hindus would free Hindustan and they alone could save Hindu culture. Only Hindu strength could save the country."[5] Nehru's pluralist modernism was even more unacceptable. The RSS therefore stood aloof in the struggle for independence, playing no role in many of its central efforts.

Hedgewar, a great organizer, inspired people through selflessness, devotion, and the simplicity of his lifestyle. But he left no extensive body of writings. We know RSS ideology, and the arguments behind it, primarily through the writings of his revered successor, M. S. Golwalkar (1906–1973), the second overall RSS leader, who wrote two influential books: *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939) and *Bunch of Thoughts* (a collection of essays and speeches, 1966). An earlier work that profoundly influenced RSS ideas, and on which Golwalkar clearly drew, is *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* published in 1923 by V. D. ("Veer," or "Fearless") Savarkar (1883–1966). Savarkar was not an RSS member, and he was actively involved in the independence struggle. His work in bringing to light the story behind the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, as well as other Indian-nationalist activities he carried on in

London, led to his arrest by the British and, eventually, his imprisonment in the Andaman Islands, where he endured cruel and inhuman treatment. (He allegedly wrote an epic poem by using a nail on the wall of his cell. Later, allowed some paper, he composed a draft of his famous work *Hindutva*.) After his release to house arrest, he became a leading figure in the Hindu Mahasabha, where he was famous for the view that India could become strong only by military might. Although his involvement with the RSS was indirect, his views and personality made him a revered hero of the movement.

Both Golwalkar and Savarkar were charismatic. A portrait of Golwalkar that appears frequently in Lalit Vachani's documentaries shows the intense burning eyes, the long beard, and the simple robe that led young men to treat him as a genuine *guru*, or religious leader. A current website in his honor states: "Pure like fire, tender like a flower, his was a personality lofty like the Himalayas. He was a great leader with indomitable courage and a sharp intellect . . . His life was wholly dedicated to the service of Motherland."[6]

Savarkar had a different type of appeal, that of a brave rebel rather than a spiritual leader. RSS expert Sridhar Damle, himself highly sympathetic to the movement and its goals, describes a meeting with Savarkar when he was still a young man. Growing up in India, Damle had been part of a *shakha* as a boy, and had at that time been fascinated by the lives of Stalin and Hitler. He told me that his mother got very worried that he was spending so much time reading about such "bad guys," so she went out and bought him books about Washington and Lincoln. Lincoln quickly became one of his heroes, he says—and yet he was also still attracted to socialism and to nationalism. It was at this time, as a college student (which in India means ages eighteen and nineteen, before one goes on to full university education) that he met Savarkar. Having come across an attack on Savarkar's ideas that he considered unfair, he sent it to the man along with his own critical commentary. Savarkar invited him for a personal audience. Damle would never forget, he told me, Savarkar's intense blue eyes, which held him riveted. He wanted to engage the great man in argument, so he began to criticize the policy of boycotting foreign products, which the Hindu Mahasabha supported. Damle had recently started shaving, and, with

the pride of a young man showing off his new masculinity, he said to Savarkar, "How can I possibly shave my face with an Indian razor blade?" Savarkar looked at him very seriously, with no condescension, and told him that everyone had to make sacrifices for the cause.[7] Although Savarkar was less austere and more worldly than Golwalkar, he evidently had the same capacity to inspire devotion through the idea of selfless sacrifice for the motherland.

Savarkar had long lived abroad, and his ***Hindutva*** is a European product from its opening words on. Under the heading "What is in a name?" it begins with the sentence "We hope that the fair Maid of Verona who made the impassioned appeal to her lover to change a name that was 'nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man' would forgive us for this our idolatrous attachment to it when we make bold to assert that, 'Hindus we are and love to remain so!'" The indirect reference to Shakespeare addresses a British-educated elite. And the end of the sentence is just as European in its embarkation on a quest for the essence of Hindu identity. The word ***Hindutva,*** now so familiar, is Savarkar's choice in preference to the religious term "Hinduism." It means something like "Hinduness" or "the essence of being Hindu." For India, essentialism is a new idea, linked to European notions of national identity.

It cannot be too much stressed that Hindus did not traditionally inquire about their essence, and probably didn't think that Hinduism had such a thing. Kshitimohan Sen, in the classic Penguin introduction to Hinduism,[8] speaks of the guiding thread as that of "unity in diversity" or (quoting from the sixteenth-century poet-saint Rajjab) that of "'The worship of different sects, which are like so many small streams, move[s] together to meet God, who is like the Ocean.'"[9] When he had an experience of illumination, Rajjab received visitors from near and far, all asking: "What did you see?" His answer: "I see the eternal play of life."[10]

Neither Savarkar nor Golwalkar denied these claims about Hindu traditions. Indeed, both were frank about their desire to reconstruct the tradition along European lines. Both admired European nationalism, and particularly the way in which nations such as Germany managed to become unified despite an initial diversity. They thought of India as weak, insofar as she lacked a unified sense of her identity. Their project was to forge the requisite conception by importing it from Europe, as a preparation for practices of nationalism and strength. On Savarkar's frontispiece, along with his definition of the Hindu, is a quotation asking God to "hurl thy mighty thunder-bolt to destroy our enemies."

Savarkar was not a religious man; for him traditional religious belief and practice did not lie at the heart of Hindutva. He did, however, consider the religion's cultural traditions to be key markers of Hindutva, along with geographic attachment to the motherland and a sense of oneself as part of a "race determined by a common origin, possessing a common blood."[11] His compressed formulation, which caught on and is uttered countless times by those who follow his lead, was that a Hindu was someone who considered India to be at one and the same time his motherland and his holy land, "that is, the cradle land of his religion."[12] (Savarkar alternated between "Fatherland" and "Motherland," using the latter particularly when he was rapturously describing the beauty of the land.) In Savarkar's view, this dual bond to the land created a very precious type of "perfect solidarity and cohesion,"[13] whereas religions like Islam and Christianity, by teaching that the holy land lay elsewhere, promoted weakness and divided loyalty: "For though Hindusthan to them is Fatherland as to any other Hindu yet it is not to them a Holyland too. Their holyland is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of a foreign origin. Their love is divided."[14]

By contrast, he argued, ***dalits*** and tribal peoples did worship gods that were fundamentally attached to this land, even if their religion was not mainstream. The same was true of Sikhs. All could, then, be genuine Hindus. At one point Savarkar suggested that Christian, Parsis, Jews, and Muslims could count as genuine Hindus too—*if* they were willing to renounce their allegiance to their holy land.[15]

In the modern world, Savarkar argued, a nation's strength depended on this type of national unity. India was well placed to achieve it, since her territory was so geographically distinct and her traditions so deep and embracing. The future of India, then, was "bound up in the last re-

sort with Hindu strength."[16] The goal was a future when India, thus united, "can dictate . . . terms to the whole world. A day will come when mankind will have to face the force."[17]

The other founding text of the Hindu right is M. S. Golwalkar's *We, Or Our Nationhood Defined*,[18] first published in 1939. There is a difference of opinion about its original authorship. Especially when its statements admiring Nazi anti-Semitism are quoted by critics, RSS people get annoyed; they typically insist that Golwalkar did not write the book but instead translated it from a Marathi original written by Savarkar's brother. Both Devendra Swarup and Sridhar Damle told me this, as if it somehow neutralized the offending statements. Nobody denies, however, that Golwalkar published the work under his own name, giving no credit to this brother. It is not clear why RSS intellectuals should think that signing one's name to the text is not an endorsement of its contents, nor why making Golwalkar out to be a plagiarist as well as a fascist in any way makes his situation better. They also assert that he knew nothing about the Holocaust and that he withdrew the offending statements in editions published after the war. But 1939 was still after the Nuremberg laws (1935) and Kristallnacht (1938); moreover, my own copy of the fourth edition, published in 1947, still contains the statements as quoted here.

Writing during the independence struggle, Golwalkar saw his task as describing the unity of the new nation. He announced that most Indians' ideas about nationhood were mistaken. "They are not in conformity with those of the Western Political Scientists . . . It is but proper, therefore, at this stage to understand what the Western Scholars state as the Universal Nation-idea and correct ourselves. With this end in view, we shall now proceed with stating and analyzing the World's accepted Nation-concept."[19] Notice the unselfconscious deference to European scholarship as what "the World" thinks.

Golwalkar then turned to English dictionaries and to British and German political science. The five elements that he found repeated as hallmarks of national unity were geography, race, religion, culture, and language. Golwalkar examined each of these in turn and then analyzed several nations to see to what extent they embodied the desired unities. Germany impressed him especially for the way in which it had managed to bring "under one sway the whole of the territory" that had been originally held by the *Germani* but had been parceled out under different regimes.[20] Turning to race, he observed:

> German race pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the semitic Races—the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by.[21]

In the end, Golwalkar's vision of national unity was not exactly that of Nazi Germany. He was not very concerned with purity of blood, and far more concerned with a group's desire to merge into the dominant whole. Groups who fell outside the fivefold definition of nationhood, he concluded, could "have no place in the national life . . . unless they abandon their differences, and completely merge themselves in the National Race. So long, however, as they maintain their racial, religious and culture differences, they cannot but be only foreigners, who may be either friendly or inimical to the Nation."[22] Unlike Hitler, Golwalkar would probably have been happy with the conduct of the many German Jews who converted to Christianity and assimilated their lifestyle to the dominant German one. As an example of what he liked, he cited the United States, with its forced uniformity of language and its generally assimilationist attitude to culture. He even applauded the fact that in the United States all religions enjoyed religious freedom—so long as people were required to adopt the culture and language of the dominant group. He observed with approval that in the United States new immigrant groups must "get themselves naturally assimilated in the principal mass of population, the national Race, by adopting its culture and language and sharing its aspirations, by losing all consequences of their separate existence, forgetting their foreign origin."[23]

Golwalkar did not have a very good understanding of the United States and its founding ideas. He asserted, for example, that Christian-

ity was the "national religion" and that immigrants who refused to assimilate lost their civil rights, living "at the sufferance of the Nation and deserving of no special protection, far less any privilege or rights." The United States has sometimes erred in this direction, for example in its treatment of Mormons and of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. Golwalkar was wrong, however, to suggest that this is our dominant practice.

Here is how Golwalkar applied his ruminations about the "old nations" to the case of India:

> There are only two courses open to the foreign elements: either to merge themselves in the national race and adopt its culture, or to live at the sweet will of the national race. That is the only logical and correct solution. That alone keeps the national life healthy and undisturbed. That alone keeps the Nation safe from the danger of a cancer developing into its body politics [*sic*] of the creation of a state within the state. From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experiences of shrewd old nations, the non-Hindu peoples in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its agelong traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead—in one word they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizen's rights. There is, at least should be, no other course for them to adopt.[24]

This was not Hitler's program; Golwalkar seemingly had little interest in testing people's blood—not surprisingly, since both he and Savarkar acknowledged that the large majority of Indian Muslims were converts. His ideas are more closely linked to those of an older European anti-Semitism, before the advent of biological race-science. In the eighteenth century, in both Germany and France, the question about the Jews was Golwalkar's question: whether they would give up their distinctiveness and agree to live in a way that embraced the religion and lifestyle of the majority. Jews were feared and denigrated not on grounds of blood, but on grounds of their determined separateness from others and their recognition of sources of spiritual authority different from those of the majority. The suggestion of many proponents of the civil enfranchisement of Jews was that they might be given civil rights if they would assimilate. In many cases this meant religious conversion, and large numbers of Jews in Germany did convert; in some cases it meant only the adoption of an assimilated lifestyle. That is the general direction of Golwalkar's vague proposal for Muslims and Christians in India: they must give up their distinctive culture and any big outward manifestations of religious difference, acknowledging the ways of the Hindu majority as their own ways, its traditions as their own traditions; if they refused to assimilate, they were to be denied civil rights and to have the legal and political status of resident aliens.

Today's Hindu right follows Golwalkar. Its members have no interest in race-science and no fear of a nation's blood's being weakened by intermarriage. What bothers them is what they think of as a dual loyalty: to the land with its Hindu traditions, and to their own religion with its culture and its own sources of ethical and spiritual authority. What they have trouble conceiving or taking seriously is the idea of a nation whose unity is political, a unity of principle and aspiration rather than of land, tradition, and blood. It is not surprising that they experience difficulty in this regard, since all the nations of Europe are currently experiencing similar difficulties as new immigrants challenge the image of a homogeneous population. Golwalkar's conception of national unity is still widespread.

Among the nations of the world, perhaps only the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (apart from India and the more recent cases of South Africa, Bangladesh, and many new nations of the developing world) have based their nationhood on the political rather than the romantic/ethnic/territorial conception of national unity. All these nations, furthermore, have found that conception difficult to sustain as waves of anti-immigrant panic or separatist agitation—not to mention the brutal treatment of indigenous people—have again and again disrupted the political consensus. Today in the United States, for example, anxiety about Muslim immigrants—though based more on fear of terrorism than on a European idea of homogeneity—once again

threatens to disrupt the idea that the United States has political unity amid ethnic pluralism. Nehru determinedly appropriated the political model of unity for India, and it seems to be the only model of nationhood that could have done justice to values of equal respect and reciprocity in that highly pluralistic nation. Moreover, the idea has deep roots in Indian history, since linguistic, religious, and cultural differences have always been a fact of life, and symbiosis has long been celebrated as a source of strength (as, for example, in the policies of toleration propounded by the Buddhist emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C.E. and in the later policies of the sixteenth-century Moghul emperor Akhbar). At the time of the independence struggles, however, Indians were torn between the celebration of diversity within political (and ethical) unity and the celebration of a more homogeneous sort of unity, based on the motherland. Golwalkar took a position that enthusiasts for the Chatterjee anthem would find familiar. But two things were new: his use of European nation-theory to articulate and further develop the "Bande Mataram" idea and, especially, his radical proposal that those who maintained their differences should lose their civil rights.

People can and do make foreign ideas their own, using them in their own ways to shape and articulate their aspirations. The fact that Golwalkar borrowed his ideas from Europe does not by itself impugn them or show that they were inappropriate for India. If they had been good ideas, we could congratulate his resourcefulness, as his followers do today. What impugns the ideas is the fact that they are inhumane ideas, based on inadequate ethnic and cultural stereotypes and a narrow, exclusionary vision of what could hold a nation together. Their foreign origin, however, does tell us something very important: that we must not defer to those ideas *on the grounds of an alleged indigenous traditional character,* shrugging our shoulders and saying, "Well, those are just Asian values, and who are we to judge?" or "See how the clash of civilizations works" or "Look at those age-old hatreds manifesting themselves." The fact is that Golwalkar turned to Europe precisely because Indian traditions seemed to him too gentle, meek, and mild, its images of masculinity too pliant and unaggressive. What the Hindu right portrays as age-old hatred between Hindu and Muslim is a modern construct.[25] Even the standard RSS uniform of khaki shorts is a borrowing, from the uniform of the British Indian police and army.

Nathuram Godse and Early Marginalization

On January 30, 1948, Mahatma Gandhi was shot at point-blank range by Nathuram Godse, a member of the Hindu Mahasabha and former member of the RSS. Godse, who edited a newspaper called *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation), had left the RSS because it seemed to him not political enough; the Mahasabha, a political party, was more congenial. As was shown by a letter written by Godse to Savarkar in 1938 and submitted to the trial court, Godse had long had a close relationship with Savarkar, whom he revered. "Since the time you were released from your internment at Ratnagiri," he wrote, "a divine fire has kindled in the minds of those groups who profess that Hindustan is for the Hindus."[26] He spoke of using the Hindu Mahasabha (of which Savarkar was then president) to build a National Volunteer Army, drawing on the resources of the RSS, where Godse was then a leading local organizer. Savarkar's picture was on the masthead of Godse's newspaper, and the two cooperated increasingly closely, especially after Godse left the RSS for the Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar appears to have known about the existence of a plot to assassinate Gandhi, and some believe that he was the mastermind behind at least the unsuccessful attack on January 20; testimony from a witness included the information that he said to the conspirators, "Be successful and return."[27] (Savarkar was ultimately acquitted of conspiracy because of insufficient evidence.) Godse asserted that he himself planned the later, successful attempt alone.

There is no doubt, at any rate, about where Godse got his intellectual inspiration or about his reasons and goals. At his sentencing on November 8, 1949, Godse read a long (book-length) statement of self-explanation, justifying his assassination for posterity.[28] Although the statement was not permitted publication at the time, it gradually leaked out. Translations into Indian languages began appearing, and in 1977 the English original was published by Godse's brother Gopal under the polite title *May It Please Your Honour.* A new edition, with a long epilogue by Gopal, was published in 1993 under the more precise title *Why I Assassinated Mahatma Gandhi.*[29] Today the statement is also widely available on the Internet, where Godse is something of a hero on Hindu-right websites, revered on one website entirely devoted to

his career as "The True Patriot and the True Indian." (This website also contains the text of a recent Marathi-language play glorifying Godse that has been banned in India.)[30]

Godse's self-justification, like Savarkar's *Hindutva,* set recent events against the backdrop of centuries of "Muslim tyranny" in India, punctuated by the heroic resistance of Shivaji. Like Savarkar, he described his goal as that of creating a strong, proud, India that could throw off the centuries of domination. The two thinkers who vied for the loyalty of Indians, as they charted their course for the future, seemed to him to be Savarkar and Gandhi. He repudiated Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence as both utopian and unmanly. Godse was appalled by Gandhi's rejection of the warlike heroes of classical Hindu epics: "It is my firm belief that in dubbing Rama, Krishna and Arjuna as guilty of violence, the Mahatma betrayed a total ignorance of the springs of human action." Indeed, he argued, it was Gandhi who was the more guilty of violence, since he exposed Indians to subordination and humiliation: "He was, paradoxical as it may appear, a violent pacifist who brought untold calamities on the country in the name of truth and non-violence, while Shivaji [and other resistance fighters] will remain enshrined in the hearts of their countrymen for ever for the freedom they brought to them." (So deep was Godse's objection to nonviolence that he earlier refused the offer to commute his sentence to life imprisonment, saying, "Please, see to it that mercy is not imposed on me. I want to show that through me, Gandiji's non-violence is being hanged.")

Godse's second major objection to Gandhi concerned his "pro-Muslim policy," which he saw in many aspects of Gandhi's politics, for example his support for Urdu alongside Hindi as national languages,[31] and his willingness to placate Jinnah and the Muslim League. Gandhi, he argued, had betrayed his role as father of the Indian nation and had become the father of Pakistan.

Godse wrote that he gradually came to the conclusion that the only way to end Gandhi's (to him) disastrous policies was to end Gandhi's life. Such was Gandhi's personal charisma that so long as he lived, the Congress Party would have to "be content with playing second fiddle to all his eccentricity, whimsicality, metaphysics and primitive vision." Gandhi's "childish insanities and obstinacies, coupled with a most severe austerity of life, ceaseless work and lofty character made Gandhi formidable and irresistible." So he planned in secret, telling nobody about his plans, and fired the fatal shots.

Toward the end of Godse's statement appears a passage that heads the Hindu-right website devoted to his memory:

> If devotion to one's country amounts to a sin, I admit I have committed that sin. If it is meritorious, I humbly claim the merit thereof. I fully and confidently believe that if there be any other court of justice beyond the one founded by the mortals, my act will not be taken as unjust. If after the death there be no such place to reach or to go, there is nothing to be said. I have resorted to the action I did purely for the benefit of the humanity. I do say that my shots were fired at the person whose policy and action had brought rack and ruin and destruction to lakhs [tens of thousands] of Hindus.

Godse's statement made a deep impact, according to one of his judges, apparently not a sympathizer with the Hindu right: "The audience was visibly and audibly moved. There was a deep silence when he ceased speaking. Many women were in tears and men were coughing and searching for their handkerchiefs . . . I have . . . no doubt that had the audience on that day been constituted into a jury and entrusted with the task of deciding Godse's appeal, they would have brought in a verdict of 'not guilty' by an overwhelming majority."[32]

Nehru believed that the murder of Gandhi was part of a "fairly widespread conspiracy" on the part of the Hindu right to seize power;[33] he saw the situation as analogous to that in Europe on the eve of the fascist takeovers. And he believed that the RSS was the power behind this conspiracy. In December 1947 he had already written to the provincial governors:

> We have a great deal of evidence to show that the RSS is an organization which is in the nature of a private army and which is definitely proceeding on the strictest Nazi lines, even following the technique of organization . . . I have some knowledge of the way the Nazi movement developed in Germany. It attracted by its superficial trappings and strict discipline considerable numbers of lower middle class young men and

> women who are normally not too intelligent and for whom life appears to offer little to attract them.[34]

(We see here Nehru's unfortunate tendency to condescend to the average citizen, which gave a great advantage to RSS organizers, who never made this error.) After Gandhi's murder, therefore, the RSS was banned, and some 20,000 of its leaders, including Golwalkar, were arrested. (The Hindu Mahasabha, which we now know to have been much more closely linked to the plot against Gandhi, was not treated this way and remained legal.) On his release from prison, Golwalkar tried to convince Nehru to lift the ban, arguing that the RSS was a valuable ally against Communism. Eventually, after prolonged negotiation and the adoption of a written constitution describing its purposes, the RSS won legal status in 1949.

During the 1950s, Nehru's staunch insistence on state secularism and his watchfulness about the danger from the Hindu right, together with the lack of any issue favoring their rise, gave the organizations of the Hindu right a weak political presence. The Hindu Mahasabha adopted radical positions, proposing a constitutional amendment disenfranchising Muslims and the annulment of Partition, by force if necessary.[35] It combined these positions, however, with conservative positions favoring landowners, thus suggesting to many that it was an elitist group out of touch with popular sentiment. The party appeared to have no coherent agenda and exercised little influence. Meanwhile the RSS worked away, at some remove from politics, organizing as a mass social movement.

In the 1960s a new political party, the Jana Sangh (or "People's Family"), came to be closely identified with the RSS. It adopted goals, such as a ban on cow slaughter, that had considerable traditional resonance and that began to garner some popularity. The RSS understood its role as that of an ongoing source of energy behind these political developments—in Golwalkar's words, "the radiating centre of all the age-old cherished ideals of our society—just as the indescribable power which radiates through the sun."[36] The India-China war of 1962 gave Hindu nationalism an agenda against the dominant Congress Party—it had been too "soft" toward China—and the 1965 war between India and Pakistan helped the RSS to whip up fear and suspicion against Indian Muslims.

The RSS had always understood itself as the center of a family of affiliated organizations. By encouraging the formation of distinct entities with similar ideologies, it could encourage the idea that this ideology was that of the nation as a whole, or of Hindu people as a whole. The most important such organization was the VHP, Vishva Hindu Parishad (All-Hindu Council), founded in 1964 with considerable help from trained RSS leaders. The VHP portrays itself as a cultural organization. It is less concerned than the RSS with youth mobilization, although it later gave birth to a youth wing, the Bajrang Dal, a quite militant and often violent organization. In official ideology, there are few differences between the VHP and its parent organization. That state of affairs is indeed deliberate, so that the ideology, stemming from a plurality of sources, should increasingly come to seem ubiquitous and natural. In style, the VHP has evolved as a more openly confrontational organization, given to mass organizing and not averse to violence; it is less focused on asceticism and strict discipline. One of its tactics is to call on many diverse and even contradictory sources of inspiration, including (a highly selective use of) Gandhi, Tagore, and many others, so that it does seem to be a universal ideology. "No great Hindu figure has been left out," write the authors of *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags*. "Rather than composing a distinct, defined lineage for itself, the attempt is to establish a complex, constantly proliferating and sprawling kinship network which stops only at the Muslim, the Christian and the 'secular.'"[37] From this point onward we may speak of the "Sangh Parivar" (Family of Groups), the family of Hindu organizations that work together, with the RSS providing core values and direction for all.

As long as Congress continued its triumphal string of electoral victories, however, there was little room for the RSS–VHP–Jana Sangh to emerge as a national political force. Indeed, the vast parliamentary majorities of Congress helped to create a fertile field for the emergence of a rival, since the failure of Congress to encourage true multiparty democracy based on ideas and policies left a void into which the politics of religion and community could easily flow, once Congress made a false step and alienated significant numbers of voters.

The first large step of alienation was the Emergency. The RSS was one of the organizations against which Indira Gandhi exerted most pressure, imprisoning many of its leaders, old and young. (As mentioned in Chapter 4, Arun Jaitley, BJP law minister until 2004, was

jailed as a student RSS leader.) This treatment gave the imprisoned leaders an aura of courageous resistance to autocracy, linking them with many other dissident forces that seemed, all together, to be defending democracy. In the election that ended Indira Gandhi's power, the Janata Party (which absorbed the RSS-affiliated Jana Sangh, though with a much broader and less communalist agenda) made large strides, and RSS members, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, became ministers in the coalition that emerged. When Congress regrouped and won the next election, however, these numbers quickly plummeted.

In 1980 the BJP, Bharatiya Janata Party (National People's Party) the longtime political affiliate of the RSS and VHP, was founded as a successor to the Janata Party.[38] Its first leader was Vajpayee. From the beginning there was uncertainty about how close the relationship of the new party to the RSS should be. Vajpayee saw that the Jana Sangh had been marginalized by its very evident RSS connection; he insisted on a broader base, welcoming Janata Party leaders who had no connection to Hindu nationalism. The party focused on economic issues such as inflation and corruption and paid lip service to pluralism with statements such as "Unity in diversity has been the hallmark of Indian culture, which is a unique, multi-hued synthesis of the cultural contributions made over the centuries by different peoples and religions."[39] At first the new party fared dismally, winning only two seats in the 1984 election. Meanwhile, however, RSS organizing continued to flourish: from 8,500 *shakhas* in 1975, the number rose to 20,000 in 1982.

BJP leaders have typically had strong and long-term RSS connections, as do both Vajpayee and Advani. Particularly pronounced is the RSS background of Narendra Modi, who was a full-time RSS worker for many years, until the RSS delegated him to play a role in the BJP, shortly before that party made him chief minister of Gujarat. Arun Shourie was accurate when he spoke of an "umbilical cord" that ties the BJP to its RSS origins.

The Rule of Rama: *Ramayana*, Ayodhya

The god-hero Rama has always been important in RSS iconography. Hedgewar deliberately inaugurated the organization on the day when

Rama is supposed to have defeated Ravana in the epic conflict between good and evil. Especially with the rise to popularity of the media-savvy VHP, images of Rama began to function as symbols of the whole family of organizations, and the image of an ideal time when Rama's rule in the world would be restored *(Ram rajya)* soon became a handy emblem for the BJP. One 1991 election slogan, for example, was "Let's go toward Ram Rajya, let's move with the BJP."[40] Rama appears in the symbolism of the organization family under a variety of aspects: a pure baby, an angry warrior fighting in a hostile universe, a king presiding over an ideal era of prosperity and morality.

In the process of appropriating Rama as party/organization symbol, the organizations transformed the traditional iconography of Rama in various ways. First, they turned him into the central god in the entirety of the Hindu religion for the entire nation. This had not been the case formerly; Rama was little known in the south, and in some regions he was not even an admired figure. Through this process of transformation the RSS and the other groups were in effect making Hinduism more monotheistic—"semiticizing it," as this development is sometimes described. There were good reasons for a movement bent on national unity to try to rein in the chaotic and colorful many-sidedness of traditional Hinduism, in which, as in ancient Greek religion, worship is highly polymorphous, local, and syncretistic. Just as the British had to invent a fiction of Hindu law to codify civil law for all Hindus in a uniform way, so too the right had to invent a fictional Hinduism, very different from its roots.

The second change that the RSS and its affiliates introduced was a change in the moral/physical representation of Rama.[41] In traditional depictions Rama, although he is the lord of the universe, is not especially warlike; he has a bow, but is not shown using it; his loyal monkey companion, Hanuman, provides him with the force he needs. In the late 1980s, however, the figure of Ram was represented differently in political posters, often connected to the Ayodhya temple issue. As Anuradha Kapur points out:

> This Ram, the adult male, resembles the figure from a Hollywood "epic." And thus Ram becomes a warrior, not easily distinguished from other warriors: Ben Hur, El Cid, or to take Indian examples, an Arjun or a Bhima. Like them he fights for possession, control, status . . . The sort

> of musculature, strength, and sportive manliness that have been the usual attributes of Hanuman have now been transferred to this Ram.[42]

In effect, Ram becomes the god of the angry Hindu: angry at Pakistan, at the internal Muslim threat, above all at centuries of subordination and humiliation.

Finally, a gradual change came about in the interpretation of Rama's enemy. In the traditional epic, Ravana is a mythical representative of evil. The new iconography of the Hindu right, particularly in connection with the campaign to rebuild Ram's temple at Ayodhya, increasingly links Rama's opposition with the Moghul empire and Muslim rule. By portraying the presence of the mosque at Ayodhya, itself a relic of Muslim rule, as the chief obstacle to the restoration of *Rama rajya*, the right has made Muslims a permanent subtext in all references to Rama. As Tapan Basu and his coauthors remark, "The new historical myths have achieved this vital substitution of associative feeling so silently and effectively that in the icons and festivals, the Muslim need not be introduced at all . . . Ram's face and his life story are enough to release a chain of associations that has detached itself from all known epic narratives and brought in the invented medieval history of India."[43]

The effort to position Rama in the center of Hindus' consciousness got a tremendous boost from a famous televised serial of the *Ramayana*, broadcast in 1987–88 in seventy-eight weekly episodes. The serials were so popular that daily life virtually came to a stop during the broadcasts, which apparently reached approximately 90 percent of homes with television. Many viewers treated the broadcasts as a religious event, performing devotions in front of the TV set.[44] In this way, writes Arvind Rajagopal, "The Ramayan serial was able to create a collectively observed weekly ritual, one that was extraordinary to witness." He notes that a film director, seeking space to shoot a scene in Benares on the banks of the Ganges, a spot usually crowded with pilgrims, priests, and bathers, was told to choose the hour of the *Ramayana* broadcast, and sure enough, the place was empty then.[45]

There are many versions of the *Ramayana* in many Indian languages. Often they contain different versions of events and even contradict one another.[46] The television network chose just one version

to follow, and suggested that this version was universal, thus standardizing the sense of what the epic stood for in the public mind.[47] As Lloyd Rudolph has written, the broadcast (and the subsequent broadcast of the *Mahabharata*) played a "leading role in creating a national Hindu identity, a form of group consciousness that had not hitherto existed."[48] The success of this enterprise was made possible by the lack of attention to religion in the public culture fostered by Congress: the alternative vision of a pluralistic and tolerant Hinduism, stressed by Nehru in his books, was never made emotionally vivid through public symbols and celebrations.

In addition to suggesting that Hindus share a single set of beliefs and traditions centering around Rama as the most important god, the serial emphasized other values that closely paralleled those stressed in RSS *shakhas:* loyalty, self-sacrifice, discipline, unity against the aggressor, the importance of sexual purity. Most important, much was made of Rama's birth at Ayodhya, as a key religious event. The production thus fueled the growing concern with the Ram birthplace, or Ram Janmabhoomi, an issue to which we must now turn.

Ram is said in ancient texts to have been born at a place called Ayodhya. It is most unclear whether this is at all the same place as the modern town of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh in northern India.[49] But many Hindus believe that it is the same, and that, from ancient times, a Hindu temple commemorating the birth of Rama stood on the sacred location of his birth. In 1528 the Moghul ruler Babur erected a mosque, called the Babri Masjid, on the spot where the Hindu temple is supposed to have existed. It is alleged that Babur destroyed this temple. There is clearly something underneath the mosque, as we know from excavations after the mosque's destruction. Indeed, there appear to be pillar bases from a number of different dates, suggesting a plurality of previous structures. An archaeological report commissioned and closely managed by the BJP when it was in power maintained that the remains are a Hindu temple, although the evidence they put forward seemed very unconvincing, and the BJP never permitted neutral archaeologists to examine the site.

A conflict concerning the site had already erupted in the 1850s, when Hindu ascetics attacked the mosque. A compromise was found, according to which Hindus might offer prayer on a platform outside

the mosque. Hindu priests began to make pilgrimages to the site; in 1883 a *pandit* (religious scholar) demanded that a temple be built adjacent to the mosque, a demand refused by British authorities.

The issue was dormant for many years. Then in 1949 some Hindus broke into the mosque and placed idols of baby Ram there—an action that Hindus regarded as a miracle and Muslims as a desecration.[50] There were indications that the Hindu Mahasabha was involved in the event. Nehru asked for a return to the status quo ante, and the governor of Uttar Pradesh ordered the district magistrate to remove the idols. He refused and was removed from his post. Nehru remained firm, however, and even arrested several leading members of the Hindu right in the region. Eventually the idols were removed and the whole situation calmed down.

In 1984 the Hindu right revived the issue, publicly demanding the "liberation" of the site at Ayodhya. At this time the VHP founded a militant youth wing known as the Bajrang Dal (*bajrang* means "strong"), associated with the monkey-god Hanuman, whose friendliness and loyalty were downplayed and whose aggressive properties were emphasized. This organization grew especially rapidly in Uttar Pradesh, where it apparently recruited 100,000 members. These young men were not given the careful RSS training of the *shakhas;* they were mainly encouraged to be "bold." In July 1984 a religious procession of diverse sects marching from Bihar to Ayodhya demanded the "liberation" of the temple and presented a petition to that effect to the state government.

The assassination of Indira Gandhi changed the political picture in several ways. First, it gave the nation a leader, Rajiv Gandhi, whom the Hindu right perceived as weaker than his mother and more likely to make concessions. Instead of staunch secularism, Rajiv (who, after all, had failed to intervene immediately to stop the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi) practiced a politics of what we might call "soft communalism," making deals with religious groups when it seemed convenient. One notable example was his dealmaking with Muslims over the *Shah Bano* case, which angered many Hindus, who saw the government as according special favor to minorities. The BJP exploited this issue, campaigning for "nondiscrimination." Second, at this time there was an upsurge in proselytization and conversion, both to Islam and to Christianity; this

trend caused acute anxiety to Hindus in many regions. Third, the state-planned economy was clearly doing badly, and although eventually Rajiv began the process of reform, he remained vulnerable on the economic front. In this changed atmosphere, the Hindu right began to exploit the issue of Ayodhya for political gain. During the 1989 election campaign, the BJP played heavily on the theme of Ram, achieving increasing success. From only 2 parliamentary seats in 1984, the BJP shot up to 85 seats in 1989 (with 11.4 percent of the total vote) and became one partner in a weak and short-lived multiparty governing coalition; in 1991 its share rose to 119 seats (with 20.1 percent of the vote).[51] Although Congress regained its majority in 1991, thanks in part to sympathy after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP was clearly on the way to national power. It was the nation's second-largest party, and it had control of state government in the crucial state of Uttar Pradesh.

During the 1991 election campaign, the BJP's second in command and Hindu-right hard-liner, Lal Krishna Advani, mounted a famous campaign tour focused on the issue of Ayodhya. In a symbolic and highly emotional journey known as the *rath yatra,* Advani traveled some 10,000 kilometers in a "vehicle designed to represent an epic chariot and decorated with the electoral symbols of the BJP (a lotus) and the Hindu sacred syllable *Om.* He was accompanied by activists clad in saffron or dressed to resemble the monkey's head of Hanuman, and loud-speakers were used to relay his speeches and militant religious songs."[52] Advani kept insisting that he was not a religious figure and that the *rath yatra* was not a religious crusade. "Don't be under the misconception that I have become religious," he said in a speech in Delhi. "I am a politician. Nowadays people tend to misunderstand me." And again, "This [*rath yatra*] is a crusade against pseudo-secularism and minorityism which I regard as a political issue."[53] People certainly treated him as a religious figure, however, offering him jars of their own blood and performing religious dances before him.[54] And they were encouraged to do so: BJP campaign videos showed Advani posing with a discus like Krishna, and with a bow and arrow like Ram; he and another minister were photographed conducting a sacred ceremony. In rural areas Advani tended to stress the devotional nature of his campaign; in Parliament and in urban discussions, the

political themes. The Congress Party, rather than repudiating the politics of Hindu supremacy, rode the wave of religious feeling, simply offering a softer version of the Hindu-first message. Where Advani traveled, violence tended to erupt. Laloo Prasad Yadav, chief minister of Bihar, arrested him in October 1990 for fomenting violence in his state. In late 1990 anti-Muslim riots broke out in several states, including Gujarat, where about 100 deaths were recorded.[55]

On October 30, 1990, a mass pilgrimage to Ayodhya organized by the VHP succeeded in forcing open the gate of the mosque; a saffron flag was placed on one of the its domes. Police used tear gas and clubs; several people were killed. The VHP claimed that fifty-nine victims were identified, while official data support a figure of between six and fifteen. The feeling of Hindu vulnerability was greatly magnified by these deaths and the VHP propaganda about them: now some Hindus began to believe that if the law was against them, they might as well be against the law.

After the elections of May–June 1991, ensconced as the nation's major opposition party, the BJP faced a dilemma. In its bid for national power, it might be wise to focus more on economic than on religious issues, which were not equally resonant in all areas of the country. (So far the BJP had made few inroads in the south and east.) Nor did the party want to be identified with disorder and rioting. On the other hand, the movement behind the party, to which it owed its entire existence and continued life, strongly demanded such a focus, pressing the Ayodhya issue in particular. It is this conflict to which Arun Shourie alluded in his 1992 RSS Founders Day speech, when he said that the BJP had attempted to "cut the umbilical cord" that tied it to the RSS. He urged that the RSS demand the loyalty its efforts had earned, and seize control once again of the BJP agenda. The VHP, too, kept the pressure on, organizing Ram processions in many regions. At a joint RSS-VHP rally on October 29, 1991, some speakers threatened that "if the BJP dragged its feet over the construction of the temple, its government in the state would be pulled down."[56] On October 31 young activists climbed onto the domes of the mosque, hoisting a saffron flag and damaging the building's outer wall. By July 1992, RSS cadres were building a concrete platform on the site, defying an order by the Supreme Court that "no permanent structure" be erected.

Late in November the Supreme Court issued an order that the government of Uttar Pradesh provide assurances that the demonstrations would not continue. Nonetheless, pilgrims continued to flock to the site. By December 5 around 100,000 people were there. Leaders of the BJP, somewhat taken by surprise, asked the RSS and its affiliated organizations to stop pilgrims from coming. While a compromise was sought (for example, giving the VHP title to a small plot of land adjacent to the mosque), the party sent Advani and Hindu-right hard-liner M. M. Joshi to Uttar Pradesh. Their speeches encouraged the pilgrims and expressed determination to have a temple built on the disputed site.

On December 6, 1992, as people gathered to listen to speeches, some pilgrims breached the cordon, entered the disputed area, and began stoning the mosque and the police who guarded it.[57] They climbed up on the mosque and began to pull down the domes, using iron rods. Police failed to intervene; most left the scene. By late afternoon, all three domes of the mosque had been pulled down.

There is still no agreement about the extent to which the demolition was planned. Advani is said to have shown signs of surprise and distress; he resigned his post as leader of the opposition.[58] Vajpayee, who was not present, stated that the demolition was the "worst miscalculation" ever made by his party.[59] Meanwhile the government, under Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, vacillated, failing to take strong action against the Hindu nationalist perpetrators. Seeing that the demolition was not receiving strong criticism, leading members of the BJP denied that there was a salient distinction between "moderates" and "hard-liners" in the party. Vajpayee delivered a speech saying that the Babri Masjid "was a symbol of shame and has been erased."[60]

In 1993 thirteen bombs exploded in Mumbai, killing 257 people and injuring many more. It is widely believed that the bombings were carried out by a Mumbai gangland underworld (with both Muslim and Hindu members), some of whose leaders appeared to have links to Pakistan, and that the bombings were some sort of retaliation for Ayodhya; but there is little evidence to back up these beliefs. Many hundreds of people, predominantly Muslim, have been arrested and remain in detention today, but no convictions have resulted and only minor offenses have even been charged. To make things more confusing,

one of the most prominently implicated suspects is Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt, of mixed Hindu and Muslim parentage (his mother was the famous actress Nargis, who later became a member of Parliament; his father, Sunil Dutt, a movie star who became a leading politician in the Congress Party). Dutt has been charged with some lesser weapons offenses and is free on bail, but he has never been tried, or charged for the major offenses in which he has repeatedly been implicated. The whole incident remains ill understood.

If in some respects the demolition of the mosque at Ayodhya helped the BJP by showing that it was capable of removing a powerful symbol of humiliation, in another way it deprived it of a focus for future planning. As historian Christophe Jaffrelot says, "it was easier to mobilize Hindus *against* the Babri Masjid than *for* anything else." The events also showed that the undisciplined forces of the VHP and Bajrang Dal played a large role in the political mix: the BJP was revealed as relying on activists whom it could not control. A subsequent series of riots, most instigated by such young Hindu activists in various cities, caused further difficulty for the BJP, which wanted to be regarded as a party of law and order. The party therefore moved gradually toward a broad-based approach, focusing not only on ethnic-religious issues but also on a range of economic and efficiency issues. In this effort the allegedly moderate leader Vajpayee took an increasingly central role. These shifts were probably more strategic than ideological; the idea that there really is a split in the party over religious mobilization should be regarded with skepticism. As Jaffrelot says, there clearly is a division of labor, with different politicians speaking in ways that appeal to different groups. A division of labor is not, however, a true division of policy.[61]

In and Out of Government

In 1996 the BJP won 161 seats, the most of any single party. Sworn in as prime minister, Vajpayee was forced to resign after thirteen days because he could not form a coalition with the requisite majority. A third-party coalition governed until 1998, when new elections led to a BJP victory. This time, and also after the elections of 1999, Vajpayee was able to form an ongoing coalition, called the National Democratic Alliance, or NDA, with a group of regional and caste-based parties. The

BJP had 194 seats in 1998 and 182 in 1999, while Congress slipped from 141 in 1998 to 112 in 1999. Most of the regional and caste-based parties increased their share of power between the 1998 and 1999 elections.

In government, the BJP attempted to establish itself as more than a single-issue party, particularly by portraying itself as the party of economic reform and globalization, of efficiency and an end to corruption, and of nuclear muscle combined with stabilization of the relationship with Pakistan.

On matters of foreign policy, the BJP more or less delivered what it had promised: India's nuclear program, matching that of Pakistan, was extremely popular, restoring a sense of national security and pride. In 2002 the Muslim scientist who had been the architect of this program, Abdul Kalam, became president, a canny step to woo the right while reassuring Muslim voters. Although individuals could be found on the left to criticize the entire nuclear arms race,[62] no major political party denounced it, and the BJP had clearly scored a public relations coup. Meanwhile the spectacle of leading politicians visiting Pakistan, while opposed by some, was deeply reassuring to many voters. The gradual reopening of the border (punctuated by several crises) led to a normalization of relations unprecedented in recent history. In January 2004, during the election campaign, the first major cricket test match between the two countries, which took place in Pakistan, was attended by leading politicians from both parties.

In domestic matters the Alliance did not fare as well. The BJP and its coalition partners continued the economic reforms begun under Rajiv Gandhi, but its preference for foreign investment in urban areas increasingly distressed rural voters, who saw their own situation as stagnant or even worsening, with the flight of employment to the cities. Particular cronies of the BJP, such as coalition partner Chandrababu Naidu of the regional Telugu Desum Party in Andhra Pradesh, seemed wedded to policies that fed economic growth without doing anything about infrastructure or rural poverty. On corruption, the record was also poor. An enterprising online muckraking organization called Tehelka.com managed to film leading party members, including Defense Minister George Fernandes, accepting bribes; the spectacle of this widespread venality (in which one of the most shocking aspects was the small amount of money for which BJP officials un-

hesitatingly sold themselves) disgusted many voters who had looked to the party for a change in the corrupt practices associated with the Congress Party.

In religious matters, the BJP attempted to distance itself from violence while remaining close to its "base." This policy proved difficult to sustain, and, in the case of Gujarat, impossible, as the "base" demanded support for Narendra Modi and his lawless activities. At the same time, the issue with which the BJP had been accustomed to sanitize its own Hindu-unity programs, that of "minoritarianism," or unfair concessions given to minority groups, also proved hard to sustain convincingly, since the NDA coalition needed to rely on regional partners who themselves demanded favors.

Thus when the party chose the slogan "India Shining" for the campaign of 2004, its boasts rang hollow. Some of the most surprising results concerned partners who had aggressively championed economic globalization: Chandrababu Naidu lost control of Andhra Pradesh. The south and east also repudiated the BJP's aggressive attempts to gain a stronghold. The issue of religious identity, though perhaps not the leading electoral issue, played a significant role. For the first time since the 1970s, the Congress Party campaigned on an unambiguous program of separation of religion and state and respect for minorities. Sonia Gandhi, herself firmly committed to the repudiation of Hindu nationalism, rejected the "soft Hindutva" of her late husband and some of his successors, and stressed in speech after speech that Congress would preserve the secular identity of the state. Her own minority identity as a Christian, combined with the strident attacks on her foreign birth by the right, vividly dramatized the issue of religious equality. Gujarat was a significant campaign issue, at least in some places; the BJP took big losses in Gujarat itself. The eventual choice of Manmohan Singh, India's first minority prime minister, to head the new government underlined Congress's commitment to its campaign assertions.

Branches: Strong Yet Vulnerable

The RSS and its allied organizations represent a staggering organizational success. In a country of more than a billion inhabitants, with

enormous regional and cultural diversity, they have managed to organize at a grassroots level virtually everywhere, certainly everywhere in the north and west, capturing the hearts of millions and turning them to their cherished causes. The capacity of RSS leaders for selfless discipline and their relatively ascetic lifestyle, in a nation where corruption is rampant, are surely among the factors that have led to its success. There are also its members' sincere values of character-building, spirituality, unselfishness, loyalty, and charitable service, in a context in which the left and center offer no alternative programs at the grassroots level to express similar virtues. It is now widely evident that Nehru and Congress, by neglecting the cultivation of liberal religion and the emotional bases of a respectful pluralistic society, left a space, empty since the death of Gandhi, within which the right could easily mobilize. The long failure of Congress to solve the problem of rural poverty has also strengthened the hand of the RSS, since its many valuable relief and charitable programs supply basic needs, drawing people in.

Today, moreover, the advance of the global market and its associated values of self-interest and adaptability, while it puts pressure on the (ostensibly) traditional and backward-looking cultural values of the RSS, also in many ways strengthens its hand, since it can increasingly be seen (both in India and in the United States) as a bastion of morality and tradition against the encroachments of a rootless amoral globalism. (Here we see one of the deepest tensions in the political program of the RSS-affiliated BJP, which has strongly aligned itself with the globalization program.)

Finally, the RSS profits greatly from the unimaginative and routinized quality of state-run education: little boys long for an education that is imaginative and fun, and the RSS cannily supplies this need.

Above all, however, mobilization thrives on fear and shame. Despite being a majority of more than 80 percent in a thriving democracy, Hindus in India clearly feel both insecure and wounded. Muslim aggression is feared, despite Muslims' small numbers and general poverty, because Muslims are seen (with help from RSS training) as a powerful aggressive force that dominated India for centuries and that seeks to do so again. Indian Hindus still identify with their long-ago situation of subordination and humiliation at the hands of Muslims; they love the plucky rebel Shivaji, who stood up to the dominating Muslim hordes,

and their identification with the underdog, mysterious as it is in terms of contemporary political reality, has deep force. Christophe Jaffrelot says that the relationship of the Hindu right to Muslims is one of both stigmatization and emulation: while portraying Muslims as bad because they are aggressive and dominating, the RSS seeks to instill in its members just those traits.[63] Jaffrelot's assessment is correct, but it omits the underlying experience of humiliation that is the starting point for both the stigmatization and the emulation. The greatest strength of the RSS lies in its clever exploitation of insecurities that all human beings feel, but that some feel far more keenly in a rapidly changing world, after a long experience of domination.

The organization has points of vulnerability. In a diverse, fast-moving culture and an increasingly interactive and cross-cultural world, any organization built on backward-looking traditional values is going to have a struggle retaining the young men it has initially attracted. Lalit Vachani's sequel to *The Boy in a Branch,* the 2004 film *Men in a Tree,* shows some of the routes out of the organization. Purushottam Agarwal, a professor of history at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, states that he simply didn't want to stay with the organization any longer. Somehow he developed a critical habit of mind, thought for himself, and decided the organization was not for him. Now he is among its most vocal critics. Kali, the hero of the first film, got a job in an appliance store and found a nice girlfriend. An attractive young man, he tells the filmmaker that he just lost interest in the organization. He prefers spending time with his girlfriend. As for the instructors, Sripad is still a zealous organization member. But the charismatic and intelligent Lalit has found a Christian girlfriend and left the group; he declined to be interviewed for the sequel. Life makes it hard for young men to insulate themselves from difference and its attractions.

More generally, any organization based on homogeneity and submissiveness has an uphill battle in India, a most diverse, pleasingly chaotic, and antinomian nation. In a nation where people don't care about even the most sensible and nonarbitrary traffic rules, but happily cross the median strip dividing one direction from another if they see an opportunity to pass someone, fascism and its cult of obedience have a difficult road to travel. These traditions of laissez-faire antinomianism are

closely linked to the pluralism and openness of traditional polytheistic Hinduism, which allows different believers to focus on different preferred gods and offers tremendous color and heterogeneity in myth and ritual. People in India often express doubt that the agenda of the RSS and its allied organizations can ultimately succeed, because it goes against "what India is," or "our national spirit." Indeed, it was precisely because native Indian habits and ways were so lacking in images of homogeneity and obedience that Savarkar and Golwalkar found the need to import them from Germany. Peer pressure and deference to authority are pitfalls for human beings wherever they are; but culture can play a crucial role in determining the extent to which these psychological forces prevail. Even in the darkest days after Gujarat, when the rule of law itself seemed in retreat, there was considerable confidence that something in the nation and its traditions (prominently including its Hindu traditions) would resist the quasi-fascist insurgency. This confidence seems to have been vindicated, for the present at least.

At the level of national politics, still more fissures in the Hindu right's agenda open up. One obvious area of conflict is the economy. The traditions of the RSS and its allied organizations favor protectionism and a focus on self-sufficiency. But the BJP rose to power in part on an agenda of foreign investment and globalization. There are intense disputes within the party over these questions. Moreover, the foreign-investment agenda is in serious tension with the communal elements of the BJP's program, since investors are both anxious and disapproving about the climate of religious tension that the RSS and its allied organizations encourage. Encouraging foreign investment, furthermore, means admitting people who challenge RSS traditions and provide alternative models for India's young people.

On a wide range of issues, the BJP must constantly play a double rhetorical game: speaking moderately to appeal to the center and win votes, but sending a message of intense ideological commitment to its base. (Much the same problem besets the Republican Party in the United States today.) Most people believe that the RSS is really calling the tune all the while, behind the scenes, setting the BJP's policy agenda. But concerning particular individuals there is genuine doubt. Is Atal Bihari Vajpayee a genuine moderate who, as Arun Shourie maintains, has quietly moderated the party's agenda and marginalized

its more extreme elements? Or is he a consummate hypocrite, speaking in one language for the public but sending unmistakable messages of loyalty to the base?

In the end, what is in a given individual politician's mind or heart, while of great importance from the point of view of psychological and ethical assessment, matters far less for the assessment of a political party and its program. Here it is policy and action that count. The BJP might go the way of the U.S. South: a period in which people dissemble, saying nonracist things that they don't mean, succeeded by a period in which a younger generation that no longer holds racist views rises to power. In this part of U.S. history, the question of when a given individual stops being a racist, interesting though it is for psychologists and biographers to debate, is not nearly as important politically as when leaders stop making appeals to racism in setting policy agendas. One could imagine public pressure within India, combined with pressures from international investors and the community of nations, leading the BJP to an era much like that of the "new South," in which Arun Shourie's account would really ring true: the same words are there, but the meaning attached to them would have become different.

This has not yet happened, however, and it is less likely to happen now, with the BJP in opposition, than it would have been had the BJP retained its position in a dominant coalition, where it was constantly being put under pressure by its partners. In opposition, the party has returned to a hard line on Hindutva and to its RSS roots. Hard-liners such as Arun Jaitley have assumed center stage; the aging moderate or pseudomoderate Vajpayee is on the way out.

One sign of the struggle to come is the controversy over L. K. Advani's visit to Pakistan in May–June 2005. On May 31 Advani laid a wreath on the grave of Mohammed Ali Jinnah in Karachi and made a speech in which he called Jinnah a "secularist and a great man who was in his early years an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity."[64] He also said that the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya was the "saddest" day in his life. He added that his own public image was at odds with reality.[65] Here we see the "new South" face of the BJP, with (former?) hard-liner Advani, somewhat improbably, playing the role that the increasingly marginal Vajpayee had previously assumed.

The uproar from his own party and its allied organizations was, however, intense and immediate. The VHP called for his resignation.

Hindu-right websites were blunter. A representative remark: "This is excellent. The great Advani sucking Jinnah's cock!! Magnificent. Utterly magnificent. A true son of India. Clap clap."[66] At the same time, of course, Advani received scornful criticism from his political opponents, who viewed his speech as the ultimate in hypocrisy. Jyoti Basu, chief minister of West Bengal from 1977 to 2000 and one of the nation's most respected leftist politicians, mocked the pretense of centrism, saying, "What he says is of no value. These people have no morality. They say different things at different places and divide people on the basis of religion . . . He was there when Babri Masjid was demolished. He was one of them."[67] Advani resigned as BJP party chair on June 7, stating that he believed that cooperation with Pakistan was the only way forward. On June 10 he resumed his post, with an uncertain future.

During Advani's brief resignation, polls showed that party sympathizers favored hard-liners Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj as replacements. At this point the hard-liners are in the ascendancy. The party has been weakened, however, by political in-fighting and, lately, by tragedy. One leading figure, Uma Bharti, former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, has left the BJP to form her own party with other malcontents. Most recently, on May 3, 2006, the BJP suffered the loss of one of its most telegenic and media-savvy leaders, when the technocrat Pramod Mahajan, architect of the "India Shining" campaign and a popular contender for the leadership, died of gunshot wounds inflicted twelve days earlier by his younger brother, Pravin. He was given a state funeral at Shivaji Park crematorium in Mumbai. Pravin, who turned himself in to the police and has been formally charged with murder, has said that he turned to violence because he felt insulted and humiliated by his brother's greater success.

The loss of the leader with the closest ties to the business world spells further trouble for the BJP, if it wishes to unite a probusiness agenda with an ethnoreligious agenda. Mahajan was no moderate; like most BJP leaders, he had been an RSS member since boyhood and had a long history of RSS leadership at both state and national levels. He was, however, somewhat "presentable" to an ideologically diverse group of voters, and his loss further complicates the project of rallying diverse groups behind the BJP banner. Clearly, the time when the BJP will evolve into the "New South" is not yet at hand.

6 Fantasies of Purity and Domination

When he quickens all things
To create bliss in the world,
His soft black sinuous lotus limbs
Begin the festival of love
And beautiful cowherd girls wildly
Wind him in their bodies.
Friend, in spring young Hari plays
Like erotic mood incarnate.

Jayadeva, *Gitagovinda*

Narendra Modi, you have fucked the mother of [Muslims]
The volcano which was inactive for years has erupted
It has burnt the arse of [Muslims] and made them dance nude
We have untied the penises which were tied till now
Without castor oil in the arse we have made them cry
. . .
Wake up Hindus, there are still [Muslims] alive around you
Learn from Panvad village where their mother was fucked
She was fucked standing while she kept shouting
She enjoyed the uncircumcised penis
With a Hindu government the Hindus have the power to annihi-
late [Muslims]
Kick them in the arse to drive them out of not only villages and
Cities but also the country.

Pamphlet distributed in Gujarat during the riots

Annihilating the Female

The leaders of the Hindu right did not want India's men to "sin" by "remain[ing] weak," passive against the affronts of history. As a linchpin of their program for youth education, they fashioned an image of Indian masculinity as aggressive and warlike, and they refashioned even the images of the gods to support the ideology of domination. A refashioned masculinity cannot fail to reshape a group's image of the male-female relationship, and so it has happened here. Domination over Hindu women and violence against Muslim women lie deep in the Hindu right's political consciousness.

One of the most horrific aspects of the Gujarat massacre was the prevalence of rape and sexual torture. The typical tactic was first to rape or gang-rape the woman, then to torture her (for example by inserting large metal objects into her genitals), and then to set her on fire and kill her. Although most of the dead were incinerated, burned with lye, or both, making a precise sex count of the bodies impossible, in one mass grave that was discovered it was possible to determine that more than half of the bodies were female. Many of the survivors who have testified are victims of rape and torture whose evidence was collected by women's organizations soon after the carnage.

Women are often raped in wartime, and many women were raped during Partition. But witnesses insist that the rapes in Gujarat were different—more sadistic, more grotesque, in ways that call out for explanation. Historian Tanika Sarkar, who as a member of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal played a leading role in investigating the events and interviewing witnesses, argued that the evident preoccupation with destroying women's sexual organs reveals "a dark sexual obsession about allegedly ultra-virile Muslim male bodies and overfertile Muslim female ones, that inspire[s] and sustain[s] the figures of paranoia and revenge."[1] This sexual obsession is evident in the hate literature circulated during the carnage, of which the "poem" that is this chapter's second epigraph is a typical example. The pamphlet's incitement to violence is indeed, as Sarkar says, suffused with anxiety about male sexuality. The subsequent treatment of women seems to enact a fantasy of sexual sadism far darker than mere revenge. In an affidavit submitted to

the Commission of Enquiry in June 2002, leading feminist legal activist Flavia Agnes, who also played a role in gathering the testimony of female victims after the riots, testified that although sexual crime is a common part of communal violence, the "scale and extent of atrocities perpetrated upon innocent Muslim women during the recent violence far exceeds any reported sexual crime during any previous riots in the country in the post-independence period."[2] The sexual atrocities, like other aspects of the violence, appear to have been deliberately planned. Identical sequences were reenacted everywhere: women were stripped, made to run naked, then tortured, then killed and burned.[3]

The idea of male sexuality expressed by the hate pamphlet is all the more horrific when it is juxtaposed with a highly traditional Hindu depiction of male sexuality, as in the first epigraph, from Hinduism's great erotic/religious poem, Jayadeva's twelfth-century lyric about the god Krishna and his love of the cowherd Radha. It can hardly be maintained that the rapists in Gujarat were enacting ancient Hindu traditions: for surely nothing could be further from Krishna's delight in erotic play, his sinuous sensuousness, than the pamphlet's equation of the sex act with destructive violence, and nothing further from the sexual behavior of Krishna than the assailants' actions, as they murdered women by inserting surrogate metal penises into their bodies.

Could these differences themselves be significant? Could the aggressors be inspired, to some extent at least, by shame at their own culture of masculinity, seen as too sensuous, too unaggressive, too playful? In *The Home and the World,* Tagore's Sandip discovers with shame a certain softness in himself that prevents him from overwhelming Bimala by force. He wishes for a style of masculinity that he associates with his British rulers and with the difference between the sensuousness of Indian music and the sound of a British military band. He associates his own failure to exemplify the British style of masculinity with the shame of being a subject.

Shame and aggression about the sensuous and receptive aspects of erotic life are omnipresent in the politics of the Hindu right—from the strange obsession with an alleged population explosion in the Muslim community to the militantly puritanical condemnation of scholarship that highlights the sex lives of the Hindu gods. What men of the Hindu right seem to want in their own families is a fecund purity, as babies, numerous and clean, arrive more or less out of the sky (as they do in the

television adaptation of the *Ramayana*), with none of the messy impure sexual dealings that the Hindu right associates with the polygamous Muslim family. What men of the Hindu right seem to want in their gods is strong muscle and warlike aggression. What they do not like to think about when they think about a god is the round belly of Ganesha, his soft elephant's trunk; the mere suggestion that this trunk might symbolize a limp penis causes violent outrage.[4] What they want in their goddesses (or the mothers of their heroes) is a spotless purity that cannot even be touched by scandal; the mere mention of a rumor that Shivaji's mother might have had an illicit love affair has led to death threats.[5] One might have thought that families usually have sexual relations, and often very complex such relations. One might have thought, too, that penises, even divine penises, are sometimes soft as well as sometimes hard. One might have thought that women, even heroic women, sometimes have love affairs, and even more often are rumored to do so. Such things are part of human life and, very obviously, part of the lives of the Hindu gods. But they are not to be mentioned, or else they are to be ascribed to that which one hates. The music of the military band drowns out Krishna's flute.

Shame is a powerful motive for aggression in human life. The sense that one fails to have some desired characteristic, often some kind of control or mastery, seems ubiquitous in human beings' relationship to their own bodies, and to the many areas of need and uncontrol that characterize a human life. But when common human experiences of need and weakness are joined to a prolonged sense of helplessness and humiliation as the result of real political events (to some extent also heightened and reconstructed by fantasy), self-hatred can all too easily turn outward, as symbolic acts of violence seek to remake a world, a longed-for pure and spotless world, in which the once-helpless are in total control, no longer threatened by the vicissitudes of mere human limbs and desires.

Shame and revulsion at the signs of one's bodily humanity have often been invoked in analyzing group violence. One particularly apposite study is Klaus Theweleit's *Männerfantasien,* a study of the writings of German officers after the First World War, particularly an elite corps known as the Freikorps. Through a study of these men's imagery for despised groups such as Communists and Jews, Theweleit shows that these defeated men, humiliated and grieving, display a ferocious ag-

gression toward the female and its signs. They commonly depict the objects of their hate as having traditionally female characteristics and, even more significantly, characteristics that are ubiquitously linked with people's disgust at the waste and decay of the human body.[6] What Theweleit's officers hate and repudiate are what psychologists call the "primary objects" of disgust—ooziness, stickiness, having liquids flowing out of one, bad smell, and so on. Thus Communists are a "red tide," Jews are like disgusting bugs and slimy slugs. The hated are the female seen as the hyperbodily—as aspects, we might say, of the vulnerable body of every human from whose mortality and weakness every human in some ways recoils. Anti-Semitic thinker Otto Weininger, whose ideas exercised a strong hold over the German imagination at this time, makes the connection explicit: the woman is the man's body, the mortal decaying oozy part of himself from which he needs to distance himself, on the way to security and mastery.[7]

Such an analysis of group hatred is appropriate to Gujarat as well, but we need to make the analysis culturally specific if we are to understand with precision the sexual violence that occurred. We must begin by thinking about Krishna—and, more generally, about the traditional Hindu attitude toward the erotic as one of life's most important sciences.

The analysis to follow draws on philosophical accounts of the emotions,[8] on cultural history of the emotions, and to some extent on (philosophically examined) psychoanalytic materials, although my argument is independent of the psychoanalytic materials and can be accepted by readers who are skeptical about them.[9] Its methodology is more humanistic than the political analysis of the rest of the book, and it speaks of matters that cannot be empirically verified. With Tagore, I believe that this sort of literary/historical/philosophical account of emotion and desire offers insights that we can get in no other way, and that only an excessively narrow type of positivism would reject them, insofar as they are well supported by humanistic argument.

"Erotic Mood Incarnate"

The world's three major monotheistic religions do not ascribe to God an enjoyment of sexual pleasure. God is imagined as disembodied,

pure spirit. Although there are interesting disputes about the extent to which the bodiless nature of God entails that God cannot have emotions such as anger, grief, and compassion, there is general agreement that sexual love and pleasure are absent. Even Jesus Christ, whose embodiment and genuine divinity are central points of Christian theology, typically lacks all connection with the sexual. Christ is not only without sexual love and longing himself; he is also at at least one remove from the sexual through the Virgin birth, and perhaps at two removes, if one accepts, as well, the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This circumstance did not prevent great Renaissance painters from depicting Christ as both male and sexual, as Leo Steinberg memorably argued.[10] Even here, however, Christ's sexuality was portrayed as a link with human vulnerability rather than as a source of erotic pleasure. Whatever is historically problematic in Dan Brown's bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*, the book is correct that the conception of Christ as married, and thus as enjoying an active sexual life, is heterodox and was forcefully marginalized by the Christian church from an early date.

Moreover, the distance of God from sexual pleasure is accompanied, in the Christian tradition at least, by a problematization of sexuality itself, seen as connected to original sin, and of women, seen as sources of temptation. (Here Michael Foucault plausibly located a major difference between Christian perspectives and ancient Greco-Roman ideas.)[11] There are many different views about the origins of such Christian doctrines, which may not have been those of the early church.[12] But certainly the sexual appetite is singled out in most of the Christian tradition as a special source of moral difficulty. Whereas appetites for food and drink are problematic only to the extent that they become excessive or take over, sexuality is problematic in itself, and can be rendered acceptable only within the bonds of marriage. In the Jewish tradition marital sexuality is valued positively, but one could hardly say that there is strong religious encouragement of sensuousness, erotic play, or sexual experimentation.

Ancient Greco-Roman polytheism had a more positive attitude toward the sex lives of the gods—so much so that traditional views gave rise to a countertradition, represented in different ways by the philosophers Xenophanes and Plato and by later Epicureans and Stoics, all of whom assailed the idea that the gods had extramarital affairs, including affairs with mortals. The gods were depicted as enjoying many types of

sexual connection, including male-male relationships.[13] Nonetheless, ancient texts do not typically go into great detail about the sex lives of the gods and heroes.

To some extent this silence may be an artifact of genre: epic and tragedy are typically reticent. Vase paintings and Attic comedy are much more explicit, and we do find some such representations there. Certainly the cult of Dionysus was generally understood to involve a veneration of both human and divine sexual power and the madness accompanying it—although Dionysus is typically represented with a small penis (image of self-control), by contrast to the rampant sexuality of his entourage of satyrs and sileni. About the other major gods, however, there is little to be known. If we ask, for example, what Zeus typically enjoys when he makes love to a mortal, we get an answer that is in part a blank, in part rather alarming: numerous abductions and rapes are depicted, but any more sensuous or mutual activity that might have followed them is not. Indeed Zeus's failure to be sensuous becomes a theme of later comic literature: the Hellenistic author Lucian depicts Zeus asking advice about how to become attractive to women, who are all (plausibly enough) afraid of him. He is told by the baby god Eros that he ought to become more like Dionysus:

> EROS: If you want to be loved *(eperastos einai),* stop brandishing the aegis and carrying the thunderbolt and make yourself really pleasing and soft to look at; let your curls grow and tie them in a ribbon, wear a purple gown, strap on gold sandals, walk to the beat of a flute and tambourines, and you'll see, more of them will tail you than Dionysus' maenads.
>
> ZEUS: Get out of here! I don't want to be loved *(eperastos einai)* by becoming that sort.
>
> EROS: Okay, Zeus, then stop falling in love *(mêde eran thele).* It's easier that way.[14]

Zeus typically dominates without play or sensuousness; it is no surprise that women prefer a different approach.

Hindu religion is unique among the world's major religions for the way in which sex is accepted as a normal and inevitable part of human life and as a part that should be cultivated rather than marginalized.

Kama, or sexual pleasure, is something that should be theorized and studied. The *Kama Sutra,* or *Treatise on Sexual Pleasure,* which many modern European and American readers think of as a pornographic text, to be read surreptitiously, with winks and giggles, is a sacred text, entirely sober and serious. Indeed, it was understood that the science of *kama* (or *kama-shastra*) is one of the three great areas of scholarly study, along with law *(dharma),* whose foundational text is the *Laws of Manu;* and political economy *(artha),* whose foundational text is Kautilya's *Arthashastra.* Together, *kama, dharma,* and *artha* are known as the three aims of human life, or the *trivarga,* as the opening of the *Kama Sutra* stresses.[15] The *Kama Sutra* is not simply a catalogue of sexual positions; it is an art of love, which includes all sorts of topics having to do with desire, emotion, marriage, and life generally. The general picture of sexuality that emerges from the text is one in which the art of sex civilizes the violent impulses in human beings and promotes some sort of erotic reciprocity.[16]

As for the gods, throughout Hindu myth and legend they are repeatedly depicted as highly sexual beings, curious, experimental. In one south Indian myth, Ganesha's father, Shiva, explains to his child why he has an elephant head:

> I, in the company of Parvati, retired once to the forest on the slopes of the Himalayas to enjoy each other's company. We saw there a female elephant making herself happy with a male elephant. This excited our passions and we desired to enjoy ourselves in the form of elephants. I became a male elephant, and Parvati became a female one, and pleased ourselves, as a result of which you were born with the face of an elephant.[17]

Other variants of the story have Ganesha born from the sweat of Shiva and Parvati as it mixed together on the ground; or from Parvati's sweat alone as she examines the dirt that was scraped off her by her masseuse and shapes it into an elephant head; or from a drop of blood that happened to be shed while Shiva and Parvati were having intercourse (thus accounting for the god's characteristic red color).[18] In all versions, Ganesha is a by-product of a sexual enjoyment that is regarded as normal for the gods. The very fact that Hindu gods (unlike Greek gods)

often have animal forms permits the depiction of the sexual to take a form that is often playful and exuberant, as what can only be fantasy in human copulation is made reality in the accounts of the gods. Notice, as well, that it is completely normal, in this tradition, to imagine a god made out of the dirt of the body.

There is an ascetic tradition in the depiction of the Hindu gods, but it is complicated by the ascription to the most ascetic of the gods, Shiva, of a very profound eroticism: his life can be seen as an alternation between two opposed identities. Interestingly, Shiva's acceptance of eroticism is connected in one myth to his compassion for mortals, which apparently leads him to take on, and endorse, their form of life. Throughout the stories of Shiva's asceticism runs the idea that desire can be controlled not by denial, but only by appropriate satisfaction.[19]

Above all, however, we must speak of Krishna, a central figure in myth and sacred scripture, the speaker of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna is a demigod, or rather metamorphoses from a heroic human, as he appears to be in the *Mahabharata* (from which the *Gita* is taken), to a full-fledged god. He is one of the most loved of the Hindu gods, and the one most often depicted in works of literary and visual art, as well as music and dance. With his characteristic thin, blue body, he is shown in countless paintings frolicking with cowherds—and, at times, fighting effectively against his enemies. Krishna is not Dionysus: his life is not focused entirely on sensuous indulgence. But that aspect of his life is regarded by literary and artistic traditions as particularly fascinating. Jayadeva's poem about Krishna and Radha is a long meditation on the different stages and moods of Krishna's eroticism; its sections are called "Joyful Krishna," "Careless Krishna," "Bewildered Krishna," "Tender Krishna," "Lotus-Eyed Krishna Longing for Love," "Indolent Krishna," "Cunning Krishna," "Abashed Krishna," "Four Quickening Arms," "Blissful Krishna," and "Ecstatic Krishna." Not only is the poem one of the great works of classical Sanskrit literature; it is also closely linked to traditions of music and dance, and is intended for public dance performance. Each section specifies the *raga*, or traditional musical form, to which it is to be sung, and the accompanying dance performances are still celebrated in many parts of the country.[20] Although its eroticism is sometimes interpreted allegorically (as in the case of the Song of Songs in the Bible), such interpretations typically do not negate the surface meaning of the text, but see that literal meaning as one example of more general themes of longing and vulnerability. As Barbara Stoller Miller writes, "Intense earthly passion is the example Jayadeva uses to express the complexities of divine and human love."[21]

Miller chooses as the epigraph to her translation of the *Gitagovinda* these lines from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* (the poem for which, above all, he won the Nobel Prize for literature):

> Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.
> I feel the embrace of freedom in a
> thousand bonds of delight.[22]

The pairing of Tagore with Jayadeva is insightful: in many ways Tagore's dance-dramas carried on the erotic tradition of the *Gitagovinda*. Tagore's own self-depiction as male when he danced (as we learn both from photographs in the Tagore museum and from accounts by those who remember him) was, we might say, Krishna-like: sensuous, full of curves and beckoning arm-gestures. (His choreographic vocabulary is similar to Isadora Duncan's; disciples of hers also studied with Tagore.)

Traditions are never simple. In the Hindu traditions of India, attachment to erotic play and reciprocity has often combined with a good deal of misogyny and with norms of patriarchal control, clearly laid out, for example, in the *Laws of Manu*.[23] Women's position in India, as in all other nations, has never been equal, and there is probably about the same amount of rape and domestic violence in India as in the United States.[24] Caste and class, moreover, complicate such norms of reciprocity as there are, making lower-caste women fair game for, and not fully human to, upper-caste men.

Moreover, at least the Brahmin traditions of Hinduism contain a strong valorization of asceticism without Shiva's concomitant eroticism. Indeed, a Brahmin is expected to play the part of the householder for a time, but then to leave his family and devote himself to ascetic contemplation. It is to these traditions that Gandhi so successfully attached himself.

We also need to qualify our claims by emphasizing that texts from elite literature and art, and even classical religious texts, do not neces-

sarily represent the traditions of ordinary people as they enact their religion. Indeed, ordinary people may not know these works of art or even these religious texts. Nonetheless the texts have at least some general validity, given their central cultural role, and typically express widespread attitudes as well as shaping them. Moreover, a colonial oppressor's repeated attacks on a people for not being respectable in a certain way (based on a cursory study of texts and works of art) are likely to make the element that is attacked more central in that people's own self-conception, even if it was not before.

Despite all these qualifications, we can still say that there is something in a common traditional Hindu conception of masculinity that is quite unlike the music of a British military band; this capacity for sensuous play is part of the lives of gods as well as mortals. Young Americans who during the Vietnam War fell in love with India in connection with the idea that eroticism would bring an end to the power of the "military-industrial complex" were naive and ignorant in many ways, but they were also on to something real about Indian traditions, something that made them different from many of our own.

We can now add another ingredient: the preference of the Indian male for talk. Perhaps this preference is most pronounced in Bengal, with its veneration of intellectuals and their books. But the love of talk, while especially characteristic of Bengali men, is a characteristic of a traditional ideal conception of Indian manhood more generally.[25]

In cultural discussions of manhood in European traditions, however, a preference for talk often codes as feminine. This idea forms part of traditional European anti-Semitism, with its disdain for the Jew's soft bookish body.[26] It is also involved in Sandip's self-critique: instead of overwhelming Bimala, he (unfortunately, as he sees it) likes to talk her into things, and most of his action in the novel is in fact talk.

When a people who have such traditions repeatedly experience subjection and humiliation at the hands of powerful, aggressively masculine enemies who repeatedly tell them that they are not real men, it is not surprising that shame should result. Nor is it surprising that such a people would seek a counterculture of masculinity that emulates the perceived hardness of the aggressor. A comparable example is the culture of masculinity in contemporary Israel, which is surely at least in part a counterculture to traditional norms of masculinity for the Jewish male. That more traditional norm is not the same as the Hindu norm: it stresses the sedentary pursuit of scholarship rather than the sensuous pleasures of dance. But the two traditions have their love of talk in common, and the result is in some ways the same: a body that to Western eyes appears soft and feminine, a culture that endorses norms of play and nonaggression, a distinctly unmilitary type of music.[27] There can be little doubt that the aggressive hardness of current Israeli masculinity is a reaction, in many cases quite self-conscious, against the perceived softness and weakness of European Jewish manhood, which brought untold misery and humiliation upon the Jewish people.

The Victorian Reaction: Direct and Indirect Shame

The presence of the British in India transformed the traditional Hindu culture of manliness in two ways. First, and most obviously, it gave rise to what might be called reactive shame, in response to the British critique of Hindu myth and religion. To the British, the Muslims were recognizable and even admirable monotheists; Hindus were wild and strange. The depiction of the two religions in E. M. Forster's highly sympathetic *A Passage to India* shows Aziz as rather like a Protestant, the Hindu Professor Godbole as a wild ecstatic irrationalist, given to all sorts of childish and incomprehensible rituals. If this is the reaction of a sympathetic observer, hostile English voices were far more blunt.

As historian George Mosse has shown in his important book *Nationalism and Sexuality*,[28] norms of sexual respectability were crucial elements of both British and German nationalism. People believed that their success as a nation depended on upholding "virtuous" and "respectable" norms of sexual conduct. Integral to these norms was a very sharp distinction between male and female sex roles, in which the male was the active, aggressive party and the female was passive. Around these sharp distinctions a normative culture of manliness grew up. The true man was not sensuous or pleasure-loving; he was duty-driven and self-controlled. "Sexual intoxication of any kind was viewed as both unmanly and inherently antisocial."[29] Anyone who seemed too "soft" or sensuous was branded as a "degenerate," a label integral to the persecution of both Jews and homosexuals, who were believed to be sub-

verters of the social fabric. Although Mosse does not study closely the colonial operations of these norms, he does observe that the concept of degeneracy was quickly transferred to "inferior races" who inspired anxiety. "These races, too, were said to display a lack of morality and a general absence of self-discipline."[30]

The Hindu male was a natural object of this critique. Polytheism was already thought degenerate and primitive, the worship of gods in animal form even more so. When these features were combined with the overt sexuality of the Indian gods, particularly in its sensuous, playful form, the Hindu male looked from the British viewpoint like the antonym of the respectable, and Hinduism looked like a religion that could never be compatible with national unity and national success. The British conveyed in many unsubtle ways the thought that it was because of this degeneracy and these "inferior" morals that Hindus needed to be ruled for their own good. The use of Hinduism to symbolize the sexually degenerate spread to places where no or very few Hindus had ever lived: in U.S. Supreme Court opinions in the nineteenth century, Hindu customs such as *sati* and child marriage were mentioned as examples of what a decent society might not tolerate, even when it protected religious freedom.[31]

Like Jews in Germany, Hindu men in India internalized this critique.[32] Reacting with self-hating shame to the Victorian English perception of Hinduism, they became determined to show that they were indeed respectable. A real man does not lounge around like Krishna, but behaves like a proper military man. The milder form taken by this shame was puritanism and denial of the sensuous. The more militant form was a culture of aggressive masculinity that emulated British militarism.

Combined with this reactive shame was a deeper and more pervasive shame. The first sort of shame reacts directly to the British critique, saying, "I must be the sort of man that will be found respectable." The second sort reacts more generally to the abject situation of the conquered, to the deep wound of not being in control of one's own life. The subject male says not only, "I ought to be respectable," but also, "I am not a true man because I have let this happen to me, and perhaps it happened to me because I was not a true man." In part this shame is the internalized self-hating version of the British repudiation; in part it

is something deeper, a wounded sense of helplessness and subjection that goes beyond mere peer pressure and conformity. In the simpler shame, sensuousness and receptivity are repudiated by chance, as it were, because the British stigmatized them. In the more complex form, they are deeply felt as aspects of one's own helplessness, as a form of psychic powerlessness that is painful to experience. We see this more complex shame, too, in Tagore's Sandip, who hates his subjection and finds himself attracted to the sort of manliness that seems a means to avoid it. Sandip perceives English sexuality as military, bright, hard-edged, definite. It doesn't lounge around, it doesn't delay, it doesn't go through a Krishna-like alternation between joy and anxiety, hopelessness and tenderness, lotus-eyed longing and bliss. Sandip feels that he could conquer if only he were the right sort of male. When traditional Hindu maleness was being mocked and assailed, held to be incompatible with national unity and national success, it is no wonder that Hindu men felt it as the source of their subjection. The thought gradually grew: we can be a true nation, successful and unified, only if we become the right (aggressive, nonsensuous) sort of male.

Looking back in history, the Hindu right, from Savarkar onward, associated the British conqueror with the Muslim conqueror and constructed a continuous narrative of shame and wounding. It is of course very difficult to know whether a Hindu shame-reaction to Muslim maleness was common during the Moghul empire, or during what periods and within what classes. Contemporaneous artistic and architectural evidence shows deep cultural syncretism; the greatest Moghul poet, Kabir, was himself reverent toward both Allah and Ram, and his spirituality was intensely anti-aggressive. Most of the historical and literary evidence involves later construction and reconstruction. Even the life of the Hindu ruler Shivaji, who surely did display aggression successfully against the Muslims, comes down to us as a tissue of legends; it is impossible to reconstruct contemporary attitudes confidently from this material—although it is interesting that a seventeenth-century life of the hero depicts Shivaji as hyperaggressive even in the womb, causing his mother to have fantasies of armed conquest.[33] What we can say with confidence is that today, people of the Hindu right remember the Moghul empire as a time when powerful Muslim aggressors tyrannized and humiliated them, destroying their temples. They link the remem-

bered wounds of that time closely to the evils of British rule, portraying their history as that of an ideal time of unity and peace, followed by a succession of humiliating conquests. And although we have no evidence that Muslims did indeed stigmatize Hindu men as not sexually respectable, a retrospective obsession with sexuality has developed in the Hindu right's representation of Muslims: they are sexually rapacious and aggressively triumphant, as if that very fact were already a critique of Hindu male purity.

Thus shame grew like a wound in the psyche of some Hindu males. The British were clever rulers. They understood that humiliation and emasculation often give rise to aggression. They were therefore careful to arrange for the subject Indian male to have his own outlets for aggression, in a place that would not threaten British supremacy. The British codified commercial and criminal law for the nation as a whole, but they left family law in the hands of the different religious communities. In *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation,* a study of the construction of gender and national identity in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hindu India, Tanika Sarkar argues that this separation of domains served the purposes of empire well.[34] It allowed the males of the subject population a sphere of rule: the household, where a man who had few rights in the outer world could be a king. Control over women's bodies was thus substituted for control over other aspects of daily life. And self-respect that was injured in the daily encounter with the racial hierarchy of the outer world could be built up again by the experience of secure kingly domination in the sphere of the family.

As time went on, this control increasingly channeled an aggression that was inspired by the experience of humiliation in the outer world but denied all expression there. The domination of women took an increasingly violent form, and the British indulged these expressions. In the face of a complaint involving the rape and death of a twelve-year-old child wife, for example, British judges resisted indigenous Indian demands for the reform of laws governing marital age and consent. They argued that local traditions required deference, and that judges were not entitled to go against them.[35] Such maneuvers had the effect of insulating domestic violence, even of this appalling and fatal sort, from criticism and change. At the same time, given that self-respect and

manly status were increasingly defined around the control of women's bodies, reform met with increasing internal resistance: for who would want to give up the one area of manly pride and honor? Thus control over the female body came to represent control over the nation.

This widespread idea helps to explain why, during the waves of communal violence at the time of independence, possession of women was such an important issue to the contending sides as Muslims established Pakistan, and as Hindus and Muslims killed one another in large numbers during the mass migrations surrounding the separation of the two nations. Women were raped in huge numbers; often they were abducted as well and forced to bear the children of the Muslim or Hindu who had abducted them.[36] The rationale of these rapes and abductions is easy to connect with the earlier history: if the female body symbolizes the nation, then in the struggle of two emerging nations the possession and impregnation of women is a potent weapon in consolidating power. Rape and brutal murder were likewise acts symbolizing the power of one group to damage the domain of rule of the other group, dishonoring the group in the process.

At first glance, one might suppose that the symbolic association between a woman's body and the body of the nation would lead to veneration of women and delicate treatment. But the idea that control over territory must be asserted by violence and destruction—the same idea that the conquered people remembered as having been enacted against them—led all too easily to the thought that one securely dominates only by violence, immobilizing the woman and erasing all possibility of resistance. Under colonialism, a nation is a ground on which men may gratify their desires for control and honor. By being exalted into a symbol of nationhood, a woman is at the same time reduced—from being a person who is an end, an autonomous subject, someone whose feelings count, into being a mere ground for the expression of male desire—in this case, of anxious and shame-ridden desire. Thus, although much of the time the male wants the woman to live and bear children, there is no principled barrier to his using her brutally if that is what suits his desires. Once the woman is no longer seen as a distinct individual, with her own desires, her own agency, it is very easy to think of her as merely a thing that should be controlled.[37]

Population: The Double Logic of Shame

The idea of woman as a ground of male kingly rule takes us some way into the grim darkness of Gujarat, but questions remain. For example, if the Muslim woman symbolizes territory to be conquered and dominated, why were Muslim women in Gujarat brutally and sadistically tortured, and then burned alive, rather than being abducted and impregnated, as during Partition?

As Sarkar says, there is something dark and unusual about the Gujarat tortures, something suggesting obsession with the female body and especially its genital organs. Torture and abuse, particularly the insertion of large metal objects into the vagina and other forms of genital torture, played a dramatic and unusual role in these events. The feminist analysis of objectification shows why there would be no large barrier to using women's bodies in these ways. But why would men inflict such tortures? Defense Minister George Fernandes treated the rapes dismissively, as if they were nothing new, saying on the floor of Parliament: "All these sob stories being told to us, as if this is the first time this country has heard such stories—where a mother is killed and the fetus taken out of her stomach, where a daughter is raped in front of her mother, of someone being burnt. Is this the first time such things have happened?" Most witnesses, however, disagreed. As one commentator writes, "The violence in Gujarat *was* different from earlier incidents of communal violence, both for the scale of the assaults and for the sheer sadism and brutality with which women and girls were victimized."[38] A Mosse-style analysis, invoking notions of respectability, conformity, and social stigma, seems inadequate to explain these differences. We seem to need a deeper psychological analysis, in which shame, operating in tandem with disgust, functions as a wound prompting reactive violence.[39]

To begin to understand the contours of the underlying fears and fantasies, we may turn to one of its oddest manifestations. One of the strangest expressions of the Hindu right's conceptions of masculinity and sexuality is an obsession with the fantasy of a growing Muslim population and a shrinking Hindu population. In reality, the proportions of the two groups have remained remarkably stable over the past forty

years. The Hindu population moved from 84.4 percent in 1961 to 83.5 in 1971, 83.1 in 1981, 82.4 in 1991, and 81.4 in 2001.[40] The Muslim population figures are 9.9 percent for 1961, 10.4 for 1971, 10.9 for 1981, 11.7 for 1991, and 12.4 for 2001. So there is a very slight decline in the Hindu population and a more significant but still quite small increase in the Muslim population. When we turn to the *rate* of growth, however, we find that while the Hindu population growth rate has slightly declined, from 24.8 percent between 1961 and 1971 to 21.5 percent from 1991 to 2001, the Muslim rate of growth *has also declined*, from 31.2 percent between 1961 and 1971 to 29.3 percent between 1991 and 2001. So the idea that Muslims have been outstripping Hindus in their birthrate has no substance. Nonetheless, it is constantly harped upon by politicians of the Hindu right. Narendra Modi campaigned on the slogan "We are two and we have two, they are five, theirs are twenty-five"—meaning that Hindus have one wife and Muslims four wives, and that as a result Hindu families contain two children and Muslim families twenty-five children. (Each Muslim wife is imagined as hyperfertile, having nearly six children to the Hindu wife's two.) In fact Hindu families display a very high rate of population growth, and Muslim families, while having a slightly higher growth rate, are extremely far from having double the number of children that Hindus have. In any case, only about 5 percent of Muslims are polygamous, and approximately the same percentage of Hindus are polygamous, although polygamy is legal for Muslims and illegal for Hindus. The Hindu Mahasabha began to harp on this theme well before independence, using U. N. Mukherji's influential 1909 book, *Hindus: A Dying Race,* to argue that Hindus are indeed in danger of extinction.[41]

Why this singular obsession, particularly when the data do not support it? As Mohan Rao argues in his study of population panics, exclusionary cultural and racial views often portray the nonrespectable "other" as hypersexual and therefore as hyperfertile.[42] Although Mosse's study of German and British ideas of sexual respectability focuses on sex roles and homosexuality, not on population, Mosse's conceptual categories fit nicely with Rao's findings concerning British population anxieties. These typically portray the Irish and the Jews as hyperfertile, the British as committing "race suicide" by allowing these people to re-

main in society and reproduce. Such positions were not only right-wing positions: they were espoused by the socialist economist Sidney Webb in his 1907 work "The Decline in the Birth Rate."[43]

Why do Hindus believe the myth of the "dying race"? Why was it so explosive an issue in Narendra Modi's reelection campaign in Gujarat? And why does it stubbornly resist confrontation with fact? When confronted with census data, members of the Hindu right refuse to back down, saying that the census has not counted huge numbers of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. So there is a precommitment to a picture, and this picture is resistant to fact. As in Mosse and Theweleit, so here: the attribution of hyperfertility and hypersexuality to Muslims functions as an expression of anxiety and shame. Hindus feel emasculated, and they are expressing a kind of envy of the hypermasculine, hyperaggressive other. But we can begin now to see that Muslims function in a more complex way in the symbolic life of the Hindu right. On the one hand, Muslims are indeed, like the British, the hypermasculine dominators, whom a self-hating shame instructs Hindu males to emulate. At the same time, however, Muslims also (unlike the British) symbolize sexuality run rampant, sexuality out of control, a flood or tide of sex and birth that threatens to drown the nation.[44] In other words, they also represent what one might call the feminine element, the element of bodily desire and vulnerability that the respectable man needs to deny in himself and discover only in others. They function like the British in one way, but in another way they are like the Jews in Germany or the Irish in England, or the lower castes in earlier Indian debates about fertility:[45] emblems of the dark, out-of-control part of oneself from which the wounded would-be dominator needs to escape, and on which he blames his subject status. Muslims can function symbolically in this double way because they are at one and the same time a subordinate group whose growth is feared and, at the same time, a remembered dominating presence, the ancestors of and handy surrogates for the British rulers who inflicted centuries of humiliation.

As British physician Lionel Penrose noted, concerning European eugenic movements: "It is a well-known psychological mechanism that hatred, which is repressed under normal circumstances, may become manifest in the presence of an object which is already discredited in some way. An excuse for viewing mentally defective individuals with abhorrence is the idea that those at large enjoy themselves sexually in ways which are forbidden or difficult to accomplish in the higher strata of society."[46] Aggression against the sexuality of the subordinated group, Penrose argues, is really a form of shame-induced hatred of and revulsion at one's own sexuality. The presence of a socially discredited group can allow the release of this hatred. Muslims, like the mentally disabled in Penrose's example, are a socially stigmatized group onto whom fantasies about sexual excess can conveniently be projected. Unlike the mentally disabled (and more like the Jews as imagined by European anti-Semitism), they are also a group whose power is feared, and whose fertility can therefore be the object of an added hatred deriving from that fear. In the context of the aspiration to national unity, the threatening "other" must be defeated; at the same time, the external symbol of one's own sexuality, stigmatized and criticized by the colonial ruler, must be obliterated.

Shame, in the context of nationalism, typically involves a self-referential component: what is stigmatized in the other is what is feared and repudiated in the self. What is this fear ultimately about? The earliest experiences of a human infant contain a jolting alternation between blissful completeness, in which the whole world seems to revolve around its needs, and agonizing awareness of helplessness, when good things do not arrive at the desired moment and the infant can do nothing to ensure their arrival. The expectation of being attended to constantly—the "infantile omnipotence" so well captured in Freud's phrase "His Majesty the baby" is joined to the anxiety, and the shame, of knowing that one is not in fact omnipotent, but utterly powerless. Out of this anxiety and shame emerges an urgent desire for completeness and fullness that never completely departs, however much the child learns that it is but one part of a world of finite needy beings. This sort of "primitive shame" is closely linked to one's awareness of one's bodily nature; it typically takes as its target those parts of oneself—bodily need, sexual longing—that are the markers of a finite needy bodily nature. If they are shameful when seen in oneself, they can be better managed if one can imagine them projected outward, so that they appear to characterize some other group of people.[47]

Closely linked to the operation of "primitive shame" is the allied

emotion of disgust: for one's own bodily fluids and processes are not merely objects of concealment but also very often, objects of loathing. The primary objects of disgust are the bodily waste products (feces, body odor, blood) and decay (corpses, rotting food); disgust easily extends itself to insects and animals that seem to have the primary disgust properties: bad smell, sliminess, stickiness. Disgust is heavily caught up in symbolic and magical thinking. Its objects are reminders of our animality and mortality, either because they are in fact corpses or waste products or because they come through a process of association to symbolize waste, excrement, and mortality. Disgust shields human beings from too much daily contact with aspects of their own humanity that are difficult to live with, the very ones of which people are deeply ashamed. Thus if we do not touch corpses or decaying smelly things, we may be able to ignore our own mortality.[48]

It is evidently not enough for human beings to protect themselves from contamination by the primary objects of disgust. Humans also typically need a group of humans to bound themselves against, who come to symbolize the disgusting and who therefore insulate the community even further from its own animality. Thus, every society ascribes disgust properties—bad smell, stickiness, sliminess, decay—to some group of people, who are therefore shunned, and who in this way further insulate the dominant group from what they fear facing in themselves.[49] This role was assigned to the Jews in many European societies: they were characterized as disgusting in those physical ways, and they were represented symbolically as vermin who had those same properties. Women in more or less all societies are assigned this role: they are the bodily (smelly, sticky) part of human life from which males distance themselves, except when they cannot help being drawn by the lure of the disgusting. As we recall, Otto Weininger even argued that Jews were really women: both groups share the properties of hyperphysicality and hypersexuality from which the clean German male must distance himself. (Weininger recommended that women give up sex so that they might transcend this destiny.)[50]

The stigmatization of minorities is, then, not merely a handy device to cement national unity. It is a strategy by which human beings attempt to cope with the shame of being helpless, as all human beings in

some way are. Thus it is likely to turn up ubiquitously in human life. It can be confined, given fortunate developmental and social circumstances. But when a group has reason to think that it has been humiliated for centuries on account of the feminine or needy parts of itself, shame is likely to take a particularly aggressive form—as with German shame after the First World War. In the wake of the war's colossal wound to German maleness there arose an obsession with the idea of male bodily purity against a contaminating tide of femaleness—with impossible fantasies of men made out of metal, uncontaminated by any fluids or blood or stickiness or stench.

Projecting disgust and shamefulness onto another group subordinates that group. But because the subordination is inspired at root by anxiety and denial, it is not a peaceable subordination. Instead, the rage that people feel against their own helplessness and animality is often enacted against that group, whether by humiliation, physical violence, or both. At its extreme point the anxiety issues in projects of ethnic cleansing: if only we could completely rid ourselves of this group, we would be free of our own death.

There is a subtle difference, however, between disgust toward Jews (for example) and disgust toward women: for women are, to dominant males, sexually alluring as well as disgusting, and one of the alluring things about them is the fact that they exemplify the forbidden terrain of the hyperphysical, which is the disgusting. Men are revolted by the idea of their semen inside a woman's vagina, and they think it quite shameful to be occupied in putting it there, and yet they can't keep from wanting to put it there.[51]

In her acute analysis of Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata,* feminist thinker Andrea Dworkin argues that this fact about disgust toward women—that men can't keep from wanting them and then feeling sullied and disgusted by them—undergirds much sexual violence, because the very understanding of dominant masculinity that makes all reminders of animality disgusting is deeply threatened by sexual desire for women.[52] The man sees, in his desire, that he is not who he pretends to be: he is an animal wanting to exercise animal functions. This deep wound to his ego can be salved only by destroying the cause of his desire.

Purity and Violation

Beneath our culturally specific scenario of direct and indirect shame, then, there lies a general human longing—to escape from a reality that is found to be too dirty and too mortal. For a group powerful enough to subordinate another group, escape may possibly be found (in fantasy) through stigmatization of, and aggression against, the group that exemplifies the properties the dominant group finds shameful and revolting in itself. When this dynamic is enacted toward women, who are at the same time alluring, the combination of desire and revulsion/shame may cause a particularly unstable relationship to develop, with violence always waiting in the wings. Women of the minority group, then, are targets of reactive shame in a double, and doubly intense, way. The body of the woman, always a convenient vehicle for such displacement, becomes all the more alluring as a target when it is the body of the discredited and feared "other," the hyperfertile and hyperbodily Muslim woman.

In the cultural and historical circumstances of (some) Gujarati Hindu males—to some extent real, to some extent fantasized—conditions are created to heighten anxiety and remove barriers to its expression. At the same time, conditions that would have militated against these tendencies—a public critical culture, a robust development of the sympathetic imagination—are notably absent in Gujarati schools and civil society. This specific cultural scenario explains why we might expect the members of the Hindu right, and the men to whom they make their political appeal, to exhibit an unusual degree of disgust anxiety, as manifested in a paranoid insistence on the Hindu male's purity and freedom from lust—and, at the same time, his consummate aggressiveness.

The hate literature circulated in Gujarat portrayed Muslim women as hypersexual, enjoying the penises of many men. That is not unusual; Muslim women have often been portrayed in this denigrating way. But it also introduces a new element: the desire that is imputed to them to be penetrated by an uncircumcised penis. Thus the Hindu male creates a pornographic fantasy with himself as its specific subject. In one way, these images show anxiety about virility, assuaging it by imagining the successful conquest of Muslim women. But of course, like Tolstoy's

narrator's fantasies, these fantasies are not exclusively about intercourse. The idea of this intercourse is inseparable from ideas of mutilation and violence. Fucking a Muslim woman just means killing her. Instead of murder necessitated by and following sex, the murder just *is* the sex. Women are killed by having large metal objects inserted into their vaginas.

In this way, the image is constructed of a sexuality that is so effective, so closely allied with the desire for domination and purity, that its penis is a pure metal weapon, not a sticky thing of flesh and blood. The Hindu male does not even need to dirty his penis with the contaminating fluids of the Muslim woman. He can fuck her with the clean nonporous metal weapon that kills her, while he himself remains pure. Sexuality itself carries out the project of annihilating the sexual. Nothing is left to inspire fear.

A useful comparison to this terrifying logic is the depiction of warlike masculinity in a 1922 novel by Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Battle as Inner Experience):

> These are the figures of steel whose eagle eyes dart between whirling propellers to pierce the cloud; who dare the hellish crossing through fields of roaring craters, gripped in the chaos of tank engines . . . men relentlessly saturated with the spirit of battle, men whose urgent wanting discharges itself in a single concentrated and determined release of energy.
>
> As I watch them noiselessly slicing alleyways into barbed wire, digging steps to storm outward, synchronizing luminous watches, finding the North by the stars, the recognition flashes: this is the new man. The pioneers of storm, the elect of central Europe. A whole new race, intelligent, strong, men of will . . . supple predators straining with energy. They will be architects building on the ruined foundations of the world.[53]

Jünger combines images of machinery with images of animal life to express the thought that the new man must be in some sense both powerful beast and god, both predatory and invulnerable. The one thing he must never be is human. His masculinity is characterized not by need and receptivity, but by a "concentrated and determined release

of energy." He knows no fear, no sadness. Why must the new man have these properties? Because the world's foundations have been ruined. Jünger suggests that the only choices for males living amid death and destruction are either to yield to an immense and ineluctable sadness or to throw off the humanity that inflicts pain.

Something like this paranoia, this refusal of compromised humanity, infects the rhetoric of the Hindu right and, indeed, may help to explain its continuing fascination with Nazi ideas.[54] The woman functions as a symbol of the site of weakness and vulnerability inside any male, who can be drawn into his own mortality through desire. The Muslim woman functions doubly as such a symbol. In this way, a fantasy is created that her annihilation will lead to safety and invulnerability—perhaps to "India Shining," the campaign slogan that betrays a desire for a crystalline sort of domination.

Only this complex logic explains, I believe, why torture and mutilation are preferred to abduction and impregnation—or even simple homicide. Only this logic explains the fantasy of penetrating the sexual body with a large metal object. Only this logic explains, as well, the frequent destruction of women by fire, as though the world cannot be clean until all vestiges of the female body are obliterated from its face.

Why this terrible and murderous vulnerability? In Germany it is easy to connect such fantasies to the devastation of the First World War, the loss of a whole generation of males, and a humiliating military defeat. In the case of the Hindu right, no single catastrophe provides an easy explanation. We must appeal, instead, to the long, cumulative catastrophe (in part real, in part constructed in fantasy) of being subjugated for many centuries, first by the Muslims, then by the British, now once again, perhaps, by the richer nations of the world—but always, still, by those rapacious Muslims and their dirty, hyperfertile women. Murder brings peace, an India that is "shining" because all traces of weakness and dirt have been wiped from its body.

7 The Assault on History

> There can be no political implication, no resource for struggle, if we deny the truth claims of these histories of sadism, if we . . . denigrate the search for true facts as mere positivism, a spurious scientism. For the life and death of our political agenda depend on holding on to the truth claim, to that difference with VHP histories, to that absolute opposition to their proclamation that they will make and unmake facts and histories according to the dictates of conviction . . . We need, as a bulwark against this, not simply our story pitted against theirs, but the story of what had indubitably happened.
>
> TANIKA SARKAR, *"Semiotics of Terror"*

The Politics of the Past

Once, the story goes, there lived in the Indus Valley a pure and peaceful people. They spoke Vedic Sanskrit, a language revealed as that of the gods when the immortal Vedas were given to humanity. They had a rich material culture, well suited to sustain their prosperous life. Despite their peaceful temper, they were also well prepared for war: they had chariots, and even horses. Their realm was vast, stretching from Kashmir in the north to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) in the south. And yet they saw unity and solidarity in their shared ways of life, calling themselves Hindus and their land Hindustan. No class divisions troubled them; nor was caste a painful source of division.

This peaceful condition went on for centuries. Although from time to time marauders (for example, the Huns) made their appearance at this people's doorstep, they were quickly dispatched, because this peo-

ple was aggressive when it needed to be, and its warlike strength was feared far and wide. As Savarkar narrates the next phase:

> After the expulsion of the Huns and the Shakas the valour of her arms left Sindhusthan in an undisturbed possession of independence for centuries on centuries to come and enabled her once more to be the land where peace and plenty reigned. The blessings of freedom and independence were shared by the princes and peasants alike. The patriotic authors go in rapture over the greatness and the happiness that marked this long chapter of our history extending over nearly a thousand years or so. "Every village has its temples; in all districts are sacrifices performed; every family has plenty of wealth; and people are devoted to religion."[1]

Suddenly, rudely, unprovoked, invading Muslims put an end to all that. The early medieval period saw brief incursions by Muslims bent on the destruction of Hindu temples; these, however, proved short-lived. Disaster struck with a heavier hand, however, when Babur swept through the north of Hindustan early in the sixteenth century, vandalizing Hindu temples, stealing sacred objects, building mosques over temple ruins. For two centuries Hindus lived at the mercy of the marauders, until the Maharashtrian hero Shivaji rose up against the aliens and drove them back, restoring the Hindu kingdom. His success, however, was all too brief. Soon the British East India company and then the British themselves took up where Babur and his progeny had left off, imposing a tyranny upon Hindustan and her people.

The conquerors are gone now, but they are not vanquished. Muslim tyranny is only a heartbeat away as the Muslim population swells and the state panders to minorities. India's children, taught from textbooks written by disreputable Marxist historians, learn that the ancient time was a time of caste and class conflict, that unity came late, and that Muslims and Hindus often lived at peace, forging a shared culture. Meanwhile British and American scholars insult the Hindu religion and colonize the teaching of its sacred texts—once again in effect laying waste to the sacred temples. Hindus must arise and show what they are made of. As one e-mail sent to American scholar Paul Courtright urges (addressing fellow Hindus), "Be brave to destroy these evil spirits

so that we could face our next generations by saving our HINDU dharma."[2]

Scholars of history and religion tend to be unworldly and apolitical. This is especially true in America, where scholars can remain remarkably isolated from politics, given their ample salaries, the excellent protections their academic freedom enjoys—and the fact that almost nobody in the outside world wants to hear what they say. In India scholarship is more central to political debate, and leading scholars can easily gain a hearing in newspapers and magazines. By choice, many Indian scholars involve themselves in political controversies. And yet few have been prepared for the furious debates over history and its teaching that have burst out during the past twenty years. The Hindu right has a deep stake in presenting a specific picture of Indian history, the one crudely sketched here, which glorifies Hindu civilization, constructs an early and unbroken unity for that civilization, and portrays Muslims as alien marauders who made no positive contribution to Indian culture. This picture has many flaws, which linguists, archaeologists, historians, and scholars of the history of religion repeatedly point out. To the Hindu right, however, the arguments of the opposition are at best correct but immoral (even if ancient Hindus did eat beef, they say, we shouldn't tell our children!), at worst scandalously false and profoundly insulting. Thus a war is being waged, in part over scholarly publications but also, and more urgently, over the teaching of children.

History is important to people's sense of their selfhood and their attempts to construct a national identity. History was important to Savarkar and Golwalkar, and it is important today to the Hindu right, because a historical narrative makes a powerful statement about the identity and unity of the nation. The ideas that India was always a Hindu nation, that this Hindu identity encompassed all India's diverse elements with considerable coherence from an early date, and that this identity is linked with glorious achievements, power, and insight—these ideas are of profound importance to the politics of Hindutva today. Equally important is the idea that Muslims have been the primary sources of disruption and trouble in India from at least the eleventh century C.E., bringing violence and separatism where before there were unity and peace. (Telling this story involves greatly playing down other

sources of difficulty in ancient and medieval India, such as tensions deriving from class, caste, and the oppression of women.)

History is important for all these reasons, and also because it provides a kind of ideal refuge from a present filled with tension and opposition. People love to dwell in an ideal past, particularly when they can tell themselves that this past is really continuous with their current identity.

To understand the history debates we need to make several distinctions. Despite the intertwining of the debate over history in India with controversies about the teaching of Hinduism in the United States, and despite the fact that scholars such as Paul Courtright (who teaches at Emory University in Atlanta) and James Laine (who teaches at Macalester College in St. Paul) get attacks from both nations, we need to disentangle the organized U.S. movement to denigrate scholars of the history of religion from the related Indian political debate, from which it has considerable independence. In an otherwise insightful summary of these controversies in the *New York Review of Books*, William Dalrymple treated all the attacks as part of a single initiative led by Indian politicians.[3] Here he is certainly in error, neglecting the powerful presence of multimillionaire Rajiv Malhotra, head of the Infinity Foundation, who masterminds the U.S. attacks from his home in Princeton, New Jersey, and who vigorously denies that he is a supporter of the politics of the Hindu right in India. Whether or not his denials are sincere, Malhotra's attacks use substantially different arguments from the attacks on historians such as Irfan Habib and Romila Thapar in India, attacks that do represent an orthodox RSS/VHP line.

We must also insist on another distinction that Dalrymple fails to make: between the political forces behind the controversies over ancient and medieval history and the rather different political forces that lie behind the attack on James Laine and the Bhandarkar Institute. The Laine episode involved local Maharashtrian issues, including a politics of caste that unites the right with the local Congress Party. The Maharashtrian debate is distinct from the national debate—although national politicians eventually joined the fray.

Still further complicating the issue is the involvement, especially in the United States, of large numbers of pious Hindus of goodwill, who want their religion to look good in the eyes of the world and who want their country to look strong and victorious. These people are typically not at all close to the politics of Hindutva in India. They are far more likely to be émigrés not yet fully assimilated in the United States, a new minority in search of self-respect and identity, and a positive image of their tradition to present to their children. Predictably, they seek identity in a close affiliation with the motherland, and they view any denigration of India's history and religion as a denigration of them. Many of Malhotra's readers are such people of goodwill. They join his campaign, or at least sympathize with it, because they believe that callous American orientalist scholars are publishing and teaching a false and derogatory version of their cherished traditions.

Demoting Sanskrit: The Politics of the Protolanguage

When European scholars began to study Sanskrit, they soon recognized that this language showed numerous similarities with ancient Greek, Latin, and the Germanic and Slavic language families. Rejecting simple coincidence (or putative universality for the shared characteristics) as explanations, they hypothesized that these regular correspondences were there to be observed because the "Indo-European" languages in question were the divergently developed descendants of a common prehistoric ancestor now called "Proto-Indo-European," and they sought lawlike accounts of how phonological (sound-related) and morphological (structural) changes might have taken place between this original protolanguage and the languages of which we have documentary evidence.[4] Comparative linguists typically begin with the data (usually the oldest written texts, whether inscriptions or manuscripts) and then work back from those data to reconstruct the protolanguage, hypothesizing what it could have been like, given that it generated by lawlike processes the languages we actually have, and hypothesizing the laws by which those transformations could have taken place.

In the infancy of this science, some of its practitioners believed that Vedic Sanskrit (the Sanskrit of the *Vedas*, the poems that represent the earliest and, to a Hindu, the most sacred stratum of Sanskrit literature) was itself the protolanguage. They thought this because the Vedas, which they dated to around 1200 B.C.E., were older than the oldest texts they knew in Greek, Latin, Germanic, and Slavic. Once the enterprise of reconstruction got under way, however, comparative linguists

quickly realized that this could not be correct: no group of laws could successfully explain how the other languages might have descended from Sanskrit. The eventual discovery of the Indo-European affiliations of Hittite complicated the picture further, suggesting that in a number of respects Hittite retained features of the protolanguage that Sanskrit had lost.[5] By now virtually all linguists believe that we do not possess the protolanguage, and that Hittite is a member of the larger Indo-European family,[6] along with Greek, Latin (and the descendant Romance languages), Persian (ancient forms of which are Old Persian and Avestan), the Germanic languages (including English), the Baltic and Slavic languages, the Celtic languages (of which Old Irish is the most important for linguistic reconstruction), Armenian, Albanian, and some other ancient languages that are little attested, called Tocharian A and Tocharian B, languages that were spoken in a region that is now part of China, east of northern India.

Although linguists doing this kind of work on the Indo-European languages do claim that it was an actual language that real people spoke, they are well aware that they are reconstructing features and sets of features that characterized it rather than the entire structure of this language as it existed at a particular moment and in a particular place. No doubt the real language, if we were ever to discover evidence of it, would contain characteristics that were not "visible" to linguists making inferences from the comparison of its attested descendants. But linguistic reconstruction is lawlike and scientific: if the laws posited are good ones, they will explain how one thing leads to another across the board, in a way that brings the varied data together and explains their similarities and differences.

Any language contains many vocabulary items that are borrowed from other languages. Sometimes, as in the case of French words in English, these words are from another language in the same (large) family, though not the same subfamily; sometimes, as in the case of Finnish words in Swedish or vice versa, they are from an utterly unrelated language. Linguists can usually show clearly which words in a language are "loan words" and which are parts of the original language. Thus, although not all the languages of India today are descended from Sanskrit—the Dravidian family of languages is another large and historically unrelated group—there is nothing to prevent Dravidian words from turning up in Indo-European languages such as Hindi,

Bengali, Gujarati, or Marathi, and Indo-European loan words from turning up in Dravidian languages such as Telugu or Malayalam. It would be utterly mistaken to interpret the presence of loan words as a sign that the languages are really akin in family structure. Structure must be discovered by an overall account of phonology and above all morphology, not by the appearance of this or that word.

The Hindu right's extremist view about Sanskrit is basically that the Indo-Europeanists are all wrong, motivated by a Eurocentric desire to demote the Sanskrit language and to upgrade the languages of Europe to parity with it. (Vedic) Sanskrit is indeed the oldest language, and (as K. K. Shastri argued) it spread all over the globe, taking the glories of the Indus Valley civilization with it. (Shastri takes an extreme position among these extremists, claiming that even the Native American languages are descendants of Sanskrit.) Sanskrit is alleged to be the parent language not only of all the languages of the Indo-European family but also of the Dravidian languages, which predominate in the south, thus of all the languages of India. As the Hindu right has not had much success in southern India, it is politically important to some to assert that the two peoples, dwelling together in harmony in the Indus Valley, originally spoke the same language (and by implication had the same culture).

Whether the extremist proposal takes the form of dismissing scientific linguistic reconstruction altogether, as a colonialist imposition, or whether it takes the form of doggedly insisting that Sanskrit is indeed the protolanguage, or very close to the protolanguage, it is not a serious candidate for scholarly acceptance.[7] Nor do many members of the Hindu right rest their claims on linguistics when scholarly controversy heats up.[8] After all, linguistic evidence is open to all, as archaeological evidence often is not: thus there is no possibility of contesting the most basic data. Nonetheless, the desire of many members of the Hindu right for a picture of Vedic as eternal, unchanging, as old as the world itself continues to animate many statements by less scholarly people.

The Aryan Invasion: Indigenism versus Migrationism

The early Indo-European linguists typically did not confine their claims to the structure and dissemination of language. They were obsessed

with the identity of the group who at one time spoke Proto-Indo-European and wanted to figure out where and how they lived. Some linguists, especially in Germany, also had racial theories: the speakers of Proto-Indo-European were "Aryans," a distinct race that was racially the ancestor of the Aryans in Europe. The great linguist Max Müller, whose work on Sanskrit influenced all subsequent work, did not accept such racial theories; but he did take an interest in the route by which a language that later would be found everywhere from Ireland to China dispersed itself in the world. There had to be some place where the protolanguage was spoken; even if it contained a plurality of dialects, the geographic spread, at some remote time, could not have been terribly wide.

The theory that long prevailed was that the "Aryan" people lived somewhere outside of the Indian subcontinent, possibly in today's Afghanistan, and migrated into northwest India around 1500 B.C.E. Müller dated the earliest Vedic hymns to a period between 1500 and 1000 B.C.E., although he also later said that "no power on earth" would ever determine for certain whether they were composed then or much earlier, even in 2000 or 3000 B.C.E.[9] Members of the Hindu right assert repeatedly that Müller's only reason for a relatively late date was that, as a believing Christian, he had to believe that the world was created in 4004 B.C.E., and thus had to squeeze all history into that narrow compass.[10] No convincing evidence is offered that Müller held this view of biblical chronology. (Indeed Müller, writing in the latter half of the nineteenth century, took an interest in the Darwinian concept of evolution and developed a related theory of cultural evolution.) The later retraction of his dating, often cited by the Hindu right, seems to show that he could not have been constrained by biblical chronology.

The typical account of the "Aryan invasion" is that the Aryans were a warlike band who migrated into new territories by military conquest. In the case of India, they conquered the Indus Valley people, who are assumed to have been a non-Indo-European-speaking people (perhaps speaking a Dravidian language), and then settled in the northwest before spreading throughout the country. Typically proponents of the invasion hypothesis use it to explain the apparent disappearance of the Indus Valley (Harappan) culture after about 1000 B.C.E. and its apparent replacement by the culture described and expressed in the Vedas.

One thing is generally agreed: the earliest Vedic hymns mention places only in the northwest, but later hymns gradually show awareness of a wider range of places, including some in the east and even the south. This seems pretty good evidence that the speakers of Vedic did migrate from the northwest into these other areas of the subcontinent. That evidence, however, tells us neither when the hymns were composed nor where their authors originally came from. The preferred answer of the Hindu right is that the hymns are of great antiquity, possibly written down as early as 3000 B.C.E., and that the composers were an indigenous group of Indo-European speakers. Thus, even if Vedic is not itself the protolanguage, it is a close descendant of the protolanguage, and the protolanguage was itself spoken in northwest India before its various bearers spread out to other places.[11]

The question of the date of the Vedas cannot easily be resolved. There are contentious archaeological issues that have at least some relevance to this question. For example, rivers that are mentioned in the Vedas, if mapped onto known rivers in a particular way, suggest a relatively early date, before one of the rivers (the Saraswati) had dried up, since it is said to be a mighty river. But it is simply not clear whether the Saraswati mentioned in the Vedas is identical with the river that today's archaeologists call the Saraswati; similarly disputed are the identities of all other mentioned rivers, and there is no likelihood that consensus will emerge on this question any time soon.[12] In any case it is not clear how much we would learn from a precise dating of the earliest Vedic hymns, since the age of a piece of linguistic evidence is not good evidence of its closeness to or distance from the protolanguage. Languages change at different rates, and it is naive to suggest that if the Vedic hymns are much older than they are typically thought to be, this fact supports the idea that Vedic is linguistically close to the protolanguage. We should conclude that the dating remains uncertain, but that the date of 3000 B.C.E., chosen because it appears to establish that the speakers of Vedic were identical with the Indus Valley people, has no support from good linguistic or archaeological arguments.[13] Moreover, the typical Hindu-right treatment of the Vedas as a seamless unity of tremendous antiquity neglects linguistic and geographic reasons to

assign different dates to the different hymns, something on which virtually all serious linguistic scholars of the text would agree. (As with ancient Judaeo-Christian texts, the idea that texts were written down at different times is not incompatible with their being divinely inspired; but many people think that historical differentiation does threaten the idea of divine inspiration.)

Could the speakers of Vedic have been direct descendants of an indigenous group of Indo-European speakers? Surely earlier linguists were much too casual in their hypothesis of an Aryan conquest. Scholars of the Hindu right are correct that some of their reasoning was distorted by race theory and by the kind of militarism that they liked to impute to the ancient Aryan people. Nowadays most serious scholars prefer a migration thesis, according to which the original Indo-Europeans gradually moved into India, as into other lands, perhaps as nomadic peoples searching for new pasturage. So the Hindu right is correct to call the flawed older arguments into question.

The positive thesis of indigeneity, however, faces one major obstacle: the prominence of the horse in all known ancient Indo-European texts, including the Vedic hymns (and of the word for horse in all known Indo-European languages), together with the complete absence of evidence of the horse in the remains of the indigenous Indus Valley civilization and of representations of the horse on seals, pottery, or in bronze. It does look as if horses, and the people who attached such importance to them, must have come in from elsewhere. Because this issue is so central, excavations that reveal bones of some animal that might possibly be a horse are immediately enmeshed in controversy. By now there are scholars who maintain that indubitable horse bones have been recovered from the pre-Vedic Indus Valley material. About this evidence, however, there is great contention, many experts believing that the bones are actually not those of the horse proper, *equus caballus,* but instead of some related animal, such as the ass or the "half-ass." The related attempt to prove that Indus Valley works of art represent horses is unconvincing.[14] But if the horse is not native to India, then it was brought there by some group of migrants at some time. The fact that horses are central to the Vedic poems and to the culture represented in them, together with the centrality of the horse in other related Indo-European mythologies, suggests, then, an external origin for the Indo-European people.

As for other aspects of the Indus Valley (Harappan) civilization, scholars of the Hindu right stress their tremendous continuity with Vedic and even modern Indian culture. B. B. Lal, for example, writes:

> there is ample evidence to demonstrate that many of the present-day cultural traits are rooted in the Harappan Civilization. Thus, you should not feel surprised if you travelled 4500 years back in time to a Harappan settlement and found a lady busy applying *sindura* (vermilion) to her *manga* (line of partition of the hair on the head), or a farmer ploughing his field in the same criss-cross pattern as do the Haryanavis or Rajasthanis today. If you wanted to place an "order" for *tanduri rotis,* you could very well do so with a Kalibanganite 4800 years ago . . . Or, should you feel like being greeted with a *namaste,* a Harappan would be only too glad to oblige you. The soul of India lives on![15]

When we scrutinize these claims, they crumble (as all such highly specific claims are likely to do when confronted with scanty archaeological evidence). What the evidence shows is that the Indus Valley people had cookovens of some type, though made of brick and not clay (as modern *tandoors* are); that they did plow their fields in a crisscross pattern (hardly remarkable, and a natural way to husband scarce water); and that one terra cotta figure out of a large group has its hands pressed together palm to palm—again hardly remarkable, and a gesture that could as easily show that this people had the habit of Christian prayer as that they greeted one another with a *namaste* (a greeting in which the palms of the hands are pressed together). (Moreover, the figure is either seated or kneeling, a very odd posture for a *namaste.*) The claim about the red color on the parting of the hair is a little better supported, but the paint on the terra cotta figure in question is so badly worn that it is very hard to tell what was red and what wasn't; certainly the red extends well down the head from side to side, in a kind of horizontal parting that crosses the standard front-to-back parting, so the style is not like that of any Indian woman known to me. In short, these claims of cultural continuity are suppositions, not serious scholarly claims.

Nor has the Hindu right offered a persuasive account of how and why the out-migration from the Indus Valley (supposed by Savarkar to be an ideal place of plenty and harmony) took place. What could have

led an intelligent people to leave such a perfect place? Indeed, it is odd that the same people who are so eager to represent the civilization as ideal and lacking in conflict should foster an account according to which all sorts of groups regularly wanted to leave this land, going both east and west out of the subcontinent, often to places apparently less fertile and hospitable. The in-migration story seems in most respects more compatible with the fiction of an ideal golden age.[16]

The Hindu right's passion to declare the Vedas the source of all good things does not yield to empirical testing. Indeed, leaders of the Hindu right have advanced the view that the Vedas are not only sources of ethical wisdom; they are also sources of all modern science worth the name. Departments of Vedic science studies and even Vedic astrology have been established in the science faculties of major institutions of higher learning such as Delhi University. Scholars receive generous grants not only for research into alternative medicine, which seems plausible enough, but also into astrology, miracles, and Vedic mathematics—not, as would be eminently reasonable, as elements of the history of science, but as elements of contemporary science.[17] In the process, a concerted attempt is made to discredit empirical science, and the canons of scientific rationality themselves, in favor of an approach based on spiritual appeal to divine consciousness. Part of the rhetoric surrounding the movement is a militant anti-Eurocentrism that brands science as we know it as the outgrowth of a parochial Western consciousness and suggests that Hindu India has radically different ways of reasoning.

"Vedic science" is a mixed bag. On the one hand, the movement at times shows excessive deference to the successes of modern science, attempting to win honor for the Vedas by arguing that they contain such modern insights as Newtonian physics and even Einstein's theory of relativity. Thus those who like to build nuclear bombs or program computers can be reassured that following Vedic science would not cut them off from what they need in order to achieve success in these fields: we can have "modernization" without "Westernization," as one leading proponent of these ideas has argued.[18] On the other hand, there is at the same time an attempt to win respectability for radically nonempirical and noncritical methods of thinking, and to brand critical thinking itself as "Western." As Indian philosopher of science Meera

Nanda observes in her excellent study, the methods of the Hindu right in such contexts converge with and draw upon postmodern currents in Western academic thought, which also stress the relativity of rationality to cultures and the inherently political nature of all scientific reasoning. The Vedic insurgency has other U.S. counterparts, very different in kind. Vedic creation science seeks to debunk the theory of evolution and to establish that human beings have existed since the beginning of the universe.

As Nanda observes, a particularly sad irony in these developments is that the canons of empirical testing and critical thinking that form the core of the modern scientific spirit are not at all unfamiliar in Indian history.[19] Nehru mentioned some examples in *The Discovery of India*,[20] and in his *Autobiography* he asserted that the portrayal of Indian traditions as mystical and antiscientific was a British stratagem, aimed at preventing India from industrializing and progressing. At times, in related ways, he characterized his contemporaries' disregard for critical thinking as a pathological reaction to colonial subjection. "Only when we are politically and economically free will the mind function normally and critically."[21] On the whole, however, Nehru tended to portray modern science as a Western endeavor. In discussing the modern period, he particularly neglected rich Bengali traditions of critical thinking, so well developed by Tagore. So both sides in this debate have erred by not investigating and seriously mining the traditions of India for what they could offer in the way of true scientific thought, open to refutation and attentive to evidence. The way to seek "modernization without Westernization" is through an emphasis on such indigenous traditions, not through a portrayal of the Vedas as a complete source for a modern understanding of the world.

In the case of "Vedic science" we see clearly a tension that runs throughout the disputes over history. On the one hand, the Hindu right sometimes expresses disdain for the usual canons of evidence and argument, often using, as Nanda notes, the ideas of postmodernism and postcolonialism: it's just one politically inflected narrative against another. At other times its scholars use arguments of a perfectly ordinary sort, with an implicit acknowledgment that the usual canons of argument are valid. This tension is an aspect of a more general tension in BJP politics between a conception of Hindu India as modern, scien-

tific, and rational and a conception of Hindu India as the seat of an ancient wisdom that makes all reference to rationality dispensable. In linguistics and even archaeology (though there with attempts to control access to the evidence), the rationalist approach predominates; in history, the postmodern-political; in science, the two are on a collision course.

Cow Slaughter: The Controversy over Beef in Ancient India

For most believing Hindus today, the cow is a sacred animal, and the eating of beef is associated with Muslims and with the British. (Gandhi tells in his *Autobiography* of the secret meat-eating club founded by a group of his friends, in order to make their Indian bodies as strong as those of their British masters.) Most Hindus today believe that their Vedic ancestors, like them, viewed the cow as sacred and deserving of protection. The protection of cattle has been a political issue for a long time. During the Moghul empire, for example, several Muslim rulers imposed a ban on cow slaughter to accommodate Hindu and Jain sensibilities.[22] Shivaji is said to have been a staunch supporter of cow protection. During the late nineteenth century the movement to protect cows gathered political momentum, even provoking some communal riots. It is not surprising that the Indian Constitution, under the Directive Principles of State Policy, instructs the state to "take steps for . . . prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle." In 1966 a national demonstration called for a ban on cow slaughter.

In the hands of the Hindu right, the issue has acquired the status of a key element of Hindu identity. Like so many other things, this feature of identity is seen as aboriginal, part of the unchanging culture of the Vedas. Thus, whereas first-rate Sanskritists in the nineteenth century routinely published articles documenting that the Vedas regarded the sacrifice of cattle as unproblematic, something the gods enjoyed,[23] and their claims met with no hostility, today's Hindu right is zealous in promulgating the view that beef was never eaten by Hindus.

This view is false, as D. N. Jha, a professor of history at Delhi University, shows in his careful survey, *The Myth of the Holy Cow.* The

Vedic hymns frequently refer to the practice of animal sacrifice, and cattle are among the animals mentioned. Indra is said to enjoy oxen and bulls more than other animals; the fire-god Agni is another who enjoys beef.[24] More generally, one can show from both textual and archaeological evidence that the practice of ritual slaughter was widespread in early India, not only in public sacrifice but in numerous domestic rituals, especially in ceremonies honoring the dead.

Opposition to animal sacrifice begins to be voiced in the *Brahmanas* (commentaries on the Vedas written between 700 and 500 B.C.E.) and the later *Upanishads,* which question its efficacy and urge ritual substitution and a practice of nonviolence.[25] Nonviolence became central to Buddhism and especially Jainism, although the cow does not have a particularly sacred status in these religions. (The Buddha himself probably ate meat—texts say that his last meal contained pork—but the Mahayana tradition soon rejected meat totally.) The Buddhist emperor Ashoka, rather than being concerned with cattle in particular, showed concern with the health and well-being of all animals. He made arrangements for their medical treatment and prohibited animal sacrifice. In a decree much of whose text survives, he also exempted from slaughter a long list of animals, including pigeons, swans, geese, ducks, ants, tortoises, boneless fish, domestic animals, bats, squirrels, pregnant or nursing sheep, pigs, and goats—but not cattle. In another edict he informs his subjects that he himself still eats meat—two peacocks and a deer per day—but that he has the ambition to give up even this meat-eating at some point.[26] Evidently, then, even Buddhism did not seek to eliminate animal slaughter, although vegetarianism is seen as an ideal. Kautilya's great economic treatise *Arthashastra,* possibly as early as the fourth century B.C.E., refers to the slaughter of cattle as commonplace. Even in the law code of Manu (200 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.) the list of animals exempt from slaughter, while it includes the camel, fails to mention cattle, holding that ritual slaughter does not count as killing. The heroes in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* (which contain materials from between 400 B.C.E. and 400 C.E.) regularly hunt and eat meat, including beef.

It is likely that by the twelfth century C.E. the practice of eating beef had stopped, although for a long time it was remembered and mentioned. Even then, violations were regarded as a relatively minor of-

fense. And there were contradictions: the cow was sometimes regarded as a polluting animal rather than a sacred animal. Today, as D. N. Jha points out, the polymorphism of the earlier tradition continues: many Hindus in Kerala continue to prefer beef to mutton (which is more expensive). By now, however, "through these incongruous attitudes the Indian cow has struggled its way to sanctity." Although there has never been a cow-goddess or any temple in honor of the cow, veneration for cows is now a key marker of what Jha calls "modern day non-existent monolithic 'Hinduism' bandied about by Hindutva forces."[27]

The major factual claims made in Jha's book have not been impugned by any serious scholarly argument.[28] What passes for criticism is simply a denial that the evidence means what it means. Typical is an online review by B. D. Ukhul, which says: "At this stage it is desirable that we . . . endorse and accept the rightful interpretations instead of clinging to defective literal translations of the Vedas which are revelations by the Almighty God."[29] Yet Jha's book was withdrawn by its original Indian publisher shortly before publication, under political pressure. "Shortly afterwards," writes Jha, "I began to get threats from unidentified callers asking me not to go ahead with the publication." A new publisher in Delhi went ahead undeterred, issuing the book in August 2001. But people who had not even read the book called it "blasphemous," demanded Jha's arrest, and succeeded in getting a court order restraining the circulation of the book. "There are no *fatwas* in the Hindu religion," writes Jha, "But a self-appointed custodian of 'Hinduism' sentenced me to death."[30]

Why does this history matter so much to the Hindu right? In every religion there are parts of the past that do not fit the norms of the present: Lot and his daughters, David and Uriah, and the practice of polygamy are just a few of the things contemporary Jews and Christians have to cope with. And surely humans' treatment of animals is one of the great uncrossed frontiers of justice in our world.[31] It is hardly surprising that people in 1000 B.C.E. ate meat, given that so many people today still do. But the well-being of animals is clearly not the central issue here; if it were, the cow would not stand out as special. The real issue seems to be the desire for a monolithic unchanging Hinduism, for symbols of identity that define Hindus across regional and cultural differences, and define them as having been the same since those days in the Indus Valley. The sacredness of the cow has special salience as a symbol that defines Hindus apart from Muslims. But the picture of a unitary, unchanging Hindu society is false; variety, polymorphousness, and change are features of all real religions, and of Hindu religion perhaps more than most.

Early India: A Perfect Society?

The debate about the cow is a microcosm of a larger debate about ancient India. Just as scholars influenced by the ideas of Hindutva like to maintain that there was no beef-eating in Vedic times, so too in general they embrace Savarkar's picture of a bountiful world that contained no injustice and no severe inequality. For this reason they like to portray the system of classes in Vedic times not as an unpleasant hierarchy, but rather as a peaceful division of labor; and they dislike any emphasis on poverty or exploitation.

The distinguished historian Romila Thapar is the most common target of Hindutva historians, at least in part because of her famous *History of India*. Thapar does discuss caste in her treatment of the early (Vedic) period, but she does not portray the Vedic class system as invariably oppressive. Instead, rather like her Hindutva opponents, she stresses that the original system was one of four *varnas,* or ethnic groups, rather than the later, more rigid and complex hierarchy of castes; and she emphasizes the early mobility among groups: "The caste status of an occupation could change over a long period. Gradually the Aryan *vaishyas* became traders and landowners and the *shudras* moved up the scale to become the cultivators."[32] Later, when caste became hereditary, there was less mobility. As for the status of women, Thapar is generous toward the early period: "the position of women was on the whole free," and the custom of *sati* was "merely symbolic during the Vedic period," as is clear from the fact that widows were permitted to remarry.[33]

Moving to the period 600–321 B.C.E., for which more evidence about the lives of common people exists, Thapar mentions that a class lower than the *shudras,* namely the untouchables, was recognized at this time, possibly as the result of contact with an aboriginal hunter-

gatherer society.[34] In her portrayal of each successive period she attends to economic and social as well as political issues, as well as the interaction between economic change and the development of religion and philosophy. Her analysis is complex: she sees both religion influencing economic developments (such as the influence of Jain refusal to kill living creatures on the development of agriculture) and vice versa. Thapar does not hold that class determined every other relationship.

The normative views inherent in Thapar's picture of ancient India appear to be those of a Nehruvian humanism. If she has a hero, it is the same as Nehru's in *The Discovery of India:* the Buddhist emperor Ashoka, who, himself a convert to Buddhism from Hinduism, advanced an idea of mutual respect between the religions in which we probably see the earliest example of a conception of religious toleration and respect.

We know an unusual amount about Ashoka's ideas, because he carved them into stone pillars meant for public consumption, and quite a few survive. Ashoka emphasized that by respecting people of other religions one did honor to one's own; by insulting people of other religions one dishonored one's own. He sought a deliberative culture in which people listened across religious lines. In one edict he wrote: "therefore concord is to be commended so that men may hear one another's principles." Thapar emphasizes that Ashoka believed both in toleration of people themselves and in toleration of their beliefs and ideas.[35] She uses his edict as the epigraph to her most recent book.[36]

Thapar portrays Ashoka's central principle as the Buddhist idea of *dhamma,* which is in effect the Hindu concept of *dharma* (*dharma* being an ancient Sanskrit word and *dhamma* being its form in Pali), but interpreted in a Buddhist way, emphasizing not piety and ritual but instead social responsibility and respect. "It was a plea for the recognition of the dignity of man, and for a humanistic spirit in the activities of society." She also praises Ashoka for a philosophy of nonviolence that led him to oppose war and to try to eliminate the human suffering caused by war. "He also states that he would prefer his descendants not to conquer by force, but should they have to do so he hopes that this conquest will be conducted with a maximum of mercy and clemency."[37] Thapar stresses, with evident approval, that Ashoka's nonviolence was not unrealistic, nor did he weaken the army. Thus she portrays her own sensibility as somewhat more Nehruvian than Gandhian.

An interest in economic conditions surfaces strongly in Thapar's portrait of Ashoka, and again her sensibility is close to Nehru's. She quotes at length an edict in which the emperor expresses concern for the physical well-being of his subjects, describing his efforts to improve the conditions of village life:

> On the roads I have had banyan trees planted, which will give shade to beasts and men. I have had mango groves planted and I have had wells dug and rest houses built every nine miles . . . And I have had many watering places made everywhere for the use of beasts and men. But this benefit is important, and indeed the world has enjoyed attention in many ways from former kings as well [as] from me. But I have done these things in order that my people might conform to *Dhamma.*[38]

This beautiful passage is a keen reminder, as eloquent today as when it was written, that economics is about people, and its point is that people should be able to lead fruitful lives. Its sentiments warn against pursuing national wealth while neglecting the mundane realities of rural village life. Development is a moral ideal. The passage sits awkwardly with Gandhian asceticism and harmoniously with a Nehruvian humanism, concerned with raising the living standard of the rural poor.

Thapar is repeatedly attacked as a "Marxist" and "Marxian historian," both in public polemics and in personal insults of tremendous aggressiveness. When she was named to the prestigious Kluge Chair at the Library of Congress, leading members of the Hindu right in both the United States and India put together a petition that got a lot of online signatures, asking the library to withdraw its offer of the chair.[39] The petition used American fears of Communists to tar Thapar as a subversive. The petition's writers evidently thought that if people became convinced that Thapar was a Marxist, they would respond by seeking to exclude her from the United States, a not implausible if somewhat outdated belief. There are legal Communist parties in India (especially in West Bengal and Kerala), but in fact Thapar has always been affiliated with the Congress Party—as the petition itself says, mentioning that she has been adviser to Sonia Gandhi. Moreover, with or without any Communist party affiliation Thapar might well have been a Marxian historian, as many distinguished historians in liberal democracies have been.[40] But in fact Thapar is neither a Communist

nor a Marxian historian. Her views are those of a liberal egalitarian humanist. The petition was a cheap type of red-baiting playing to American fear. Fortunately, officials at the Library of Congress greeted it with the indifference that it deserved.

Romila Thapar is a distinguished, rather aristocratic woman in her seventies, in somewhat frail health but with a stately bearing, a deep, mellifluous voice, and elite, British-accented English. When I interviewed her she was a warm and gracious hostess; but she is a tough debater in academic contexts, and one can see that she would be a very difficult opponent for her adversaries, in part because of her cool attachment to analytical rationality. Thapar says of her opponents that they are "furious with anybody who says, wait a minute, let's look at it analytically. It's got to be the golden age . . . it has to be the foundation of world civilization . . . To put it in a nutshell, their history is a matter of belief, it's not a matter of evidence, analysis, and logical argument—which is what we are arguing, that we must produce reliable evidence, let us analyze it and then let us come to a conclusion on the basis of the logic of the analysis."[41]

The attacks on her began over the beef-eating issue, which she raised in 1966, well before Jha. "The first article [attacking her] said that there was not evidence and that it was being made up, and so I responded with chapter and verse, both the text and the archaeology. Then came the next position—that yes, yes, there is evidence, but it is not morally correct to bring up Indian children to believe that the Aryans ate beef . . . whereas my morality said that you do have to explain to the Indian child why at one stage beef was eaten and at a later stage it got prohibited. This is a very fundamental historical question." One can see that Thapar's morality of truthfulness, evidence, and analysis would be infuriating to opponents who want to base history on idealization and belief, and doubly so if the defender of argument is female. Thapar's cool carefulness extends to her characterization of her enemies: she refuses to use the word "Hindu" to characterize them, "because there are so many positive things about Hinduism that are not reflected by them."

Not surprisingly, attacks on Thapar greatly intensified during the ascendancy of the Hindu right. She received obscene and threatening phone calls during the night whenever her name came into the news—

both in India and when she was visiting in the United States. The most common tactic in the public attack on her has been to brand her as a leftist, in such a way as to suggest that there are two equal narratives—she gives her leftist story and they are giving the other side, it's just a question of "whose propaganda is stronger." She feels that the real danger is that people will say, oh well, she is just controversial—rather than assessing the arguments for themselves.

Medieval India: Syncretism or Separatism?

If early India is somewhat controversial, a far more heated controversy has erupted over the depiction of the relationship of Hindus to Muslims in medieval India, both at the time of earlier Muslim invasions and under the Moghul empire. The aim of the Hindu right is to portray Muslims as brutal alien invaders who destroyed Hindu religious sites and to downplay evidence of mutual respect, syncretism, and amity. Once again, Thapar is at the heart of the controversy.

Thapar's most recent book is an investigation of the many different accounts of a famous event of 1026, the raid on the temple of Somanatha in Gujarat by Mahmud of Ghazni, who is said to have plundered the temple's treasure and to have broken its sacred idol. "The received opinion is that this event marked a crystallizing of attitudes, both of the plundered and the plunderers, and these remained antagonistic to each other from that moment on."[42] The received view also posits two hostile and internally homogeneous groups, Hindus and Muslims, who have remained more or less the same ever since. The book examines all the evidence for this event, including accounts told from many different perspectives, Hindu, Jain, Turko-Persian, colonial, nationalist. Most of the book is dedicated to showing how complex the evidence actually is and what contradictions it contains. The evidence is laid out in such a way that readers can draw their own conclusions.

Thapar suggests that several conclusions may reasonably be inferred from the data she presents. First, she argues that later sources, particularly British ones, constructed a memory of catastrophe and trauma that went well beyond the actual evidence in earlier material, where it is

clear, for example, that the revival after the attack must have been rather rapid, given the large amount of temple-building that went on soon afterward in the region. Second, neither of the groups depicted was internally homogeneous. Turko-Persian accounts of "Islam" claim to speak for all Muslims, neglecting the Arab groups who were already in contact with Hindu and Jain traders in Gujarat. Different Hindu sects often had mutually hostile relations, and sackings of Hindu temples by Hindus were known in the period (for example, of Jain temples by Shaivites, followers of Shiva; and of temples in other regions by Hindu rulers from Kashmir). Once again, later versions efface this complexity, constructing a simpler past. Third, temples played political and economic as well as religious roles at this time, and there is evidence that at least one prominent motive for temple plunderings of all sorts was economic. Fourth, each group used the event to proclaim its own values: the superiority of Islam to Hinduism, the superiority of Jain to Shaivite values, the centrality of trade and profit, the eternal antagonistic duality of Hindus and Muslims. The existence of conflicting accounts does not mean that we can say nothing of what took place. It does mean that our reading of sources must always be "historically contextual, multifaceted and aware of the ideological structures implicit in the narratives."[43]

Typical of the Hindu right's reaction to this book is a review by Meenakshi Jain, whose textbook *Medieval India* displaced Thapar's own textbook during the ascendancy of the BJP government.[44] Jain represents the book as an example of Indian Marxist historiography, which strains the truth to fit the history of India to Western intellectual trends. The analysis in the book is not in fact particularly Marxist; Thapar's claim that economic motives were among the motives for the attack on the temple is unremarkable and obvious.

Jain then claims that Thapar's central purpose is to show that the Hindu community did not exist as a unity in the past. Actually, although Thapar does draw attention to the evidence of plurality and heterogeneity within Hinduism and the existence of hostile relations between sects, she never says that the term "Hindu" is a misnomer in this period; indeed she regularly uses the term.

Next Jain makes what seems a point worth discussing: Hindu temple-sackings were not understood as following any commandment in

Hindu scripture, whereas Muslim temple-sacking was seen (she says) as following a Quranic injunction, and this difference explains why Muslim temple-sackings typically involved not merely plundering, but also desecration of sacred religious idols. This is an interesting observation, suggesting an area that Thapar might have explored, and showing that Jain is not simply producing a hatchet job.

The rest of the review is a series of references to passages in medieval Hindu literature that report pain at the sacking of a temple by Muslims. Jain's point is presumably to show that Muslims are known as brutal sackers, and that this overall reputation should have been mentioned in Thapar's book. In order to assess this claim, however, one would have to know a great deal more about how representative her small number of examples is and what purpose each narrative was serving. Whereas Thapar looks at narratives with a quizzical eye, seeing them as occasions for ideology on both the Muslim and the Hindu sides, Jain never subjects her evidence to this sort of interrogation.

The air of a dogmatic ideology hangs heavy in Jain's review, making her serious points less convincing than they would otherwise be. And Jain does have a fixed ideological view. In her textbook for the National Council of Educational Research and Training, Jain says of Mahmud of Ghazni, "Everywhere he ravaged temples, pillaged cities, and collected untold wealth." She describes all his attacks as focused on the "triumph against idolatry."[45] She says nothing about the complexity of the period or its sources. One feels a longing for some of the critical and inquisitive spirit that animates Thapar's treatment.

The Moghul empire represents the apex of Muslim influence in India. Beginning with Babur's victory in 1525 and extending through the sultanates of Humayun (1530–1556), Akbar (1556–1605), Jahangir (1605–1627), Shah Jehan (1627–1658), and Aurangzeb (1658–1707), the empire left its mark on the whole of northern India in all the arts, as well as in political and economic life. One cannot travel in this region without becoming acutely aware that diverse people have lived there side by side in at least frequent amity, with rich and fruitful cultural exchanges. All the architecture and visual art of the period is complexly syncretistic, and part of its beauty derives from its artful blending of elements from distinct religious traditions.

Nor could any interpreter of the period deny that there was a great

deal of religious toleration and even religious syncretism. Akbar in particular founded a state religion that was an odd amalgam of bits of all the religions he knew. His favorite poet, the great Sufi Muslim poet Kabir, regularly included homage to both Allah and Ram in his lyrics. More generally, until the time of the repressive Aurangzeb (and even under the conqueror Babur), Hindus were allowed to build temples and to practice their religion. Jain, however, favors a simple narrative of Muslim aggression and Hindu suffering/resistance. Throughout the section on the Moghuls she largely ignores the arts, concentrating on battles, so that no syncretism has a chance to emerge.

Jain does present an accurate if brief portrait of Akbar's religious views, saying that he believed that he was "responsible for the well-being of all his subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It was his duty to extend the canopy of justice to all, irrespective of sectarian affiliations." She quotes his statement that "divine worship in monarchs . . . consists in their justice and good administration" and mentions that "Peace with all" was his motto.[46] Yet Jain immediately undercuts this evidence of tolerance by asserting: "The imperial ideology . . . enforced by Akbar is generally viewed as diverging from the Islamic theory of state, which unambiguously accorded differential status to non-Muslim subjects."[47] This point needs further development: What does she include under "the Islamic theory of the state," and what textual sources does she have in mind? Jain has already acknowledged that Islam contains divergent strands. If she had investigated this issue further, readers would have discovered that Islamic rulers had considerable latitude to diverge from some traditions without censure (as Jain herself grants later, saying that "only two contemporary sources charged Akbar with deviation from Islam").[48] On the whole, Jain's account displays a constant oscillation between responsibility to the truth, which she clearly does feel, and the demands of a prior ideological commitment.

Are there other serious charges that might be made against left-wing historians? In his vitriolic book *Eminent Historians,* Arun Shourie has charged a large group of historians who dominated the Indian Council for Historical Research with both Marxist ideology and with arranging to corner desirable monetary grants for their own group. The financial charge seems to an independent and highly critical observer, journalist Ramachandra Guha, overdone and a little silly: the amounts mentioned are "piffling . . . the kind of money that Shourie's political colleagues would reckon to make in less than a day."[49] Guha does complain, however, of an atmosphere of intellectual orthodoxy and a lack of methodological diversity in the ICHR group, which he contrasts unfavorably with the Indian Council of Social Science Research during the same period. In particular, he feels that a genuine liberal position—which he (tendentiously) takes to involve a strong defense of political freedom and equality for all citizens, combined with a rejection of affirmative action—has not been given due representation on government committees, either by the old ICHR group or by its Hindu-right successors.

Such a complaint, coming from a thoughtful, independent observer, suggests that one might well find that before the ascendancy of the BJP historical scholarship tended toward an excessive emphasis on political solidarity and a deficient interest in intellectual diversity. There are legitimate questions to be raised in this area, although they are subtle questions. There is nothing subtle, by contrast, about the flagrant abuse of power by the ICHR under the BJP government. Just one example is the refusal to publish two volumes of documentary history commissioned by the council from the leading left-wing historians Sumit Sarkar and K. N. Panikkar; the authors have been denied permission to seek publication elsewhere, on the grounds that they use documents in the ICHR archives. Thus this important research has not seen the light of day. The reason would appear to be the evidence the volumes amass documenting the extent to which the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha failed to support the independence struggle.[50]

Moreover, there is no denying that the targets of the Hindu right are distinguished scholars whose work is egregiously mischaracterized in the attacks on them. The Hindu right has not managed to recruit to its own ranks scholars of comparable distinction. The in-house historians of the Hindu right are people whose scholarship is from low to middling quality, with Jain at the high end of the intellectual spectrum. And even Jain, trained as a sociologist, with no major publications in history as yet, appears to have entered the ranks of the historians with a political mission that has prevented her from following the puzzles of the past for their own sake.

When I interviewed Meenakshi Jain in June 2004, I had no doubt that I was in the presence of a highly intelligent and articulate young woman. But what seemed lacking were two essential virtues of the scholar: puzzlement and a sense of difficulty. I have rarely been so dogmatically lectured to, not even in my schooldays. As Jain sat opposite me listing all the alleged misrepresentations and errors of her critics, I decided to confront her about her dogmatism. "If I may ask," I said, "what were the problems that puzzled you when you were writing *Medieval India?* What were you uncertain about?" Jain seemed surprised and totally disconcerted by this question. She asked me to repeat it. I paraphrased, "What are the things you were uncertain about? Because obviously history is very complicated, and everything you have said here sounds like it is crystal clear."[51]

Jain was ruffled. I could see that she was taking the question as a terrible insult, an assault on her scholarship. Instead of replying, she plunged into a list of the allegedly unfair things that had been said against her. Later, returning to the topic, I explained at some length, trying to dispel the impression of insult, that it was my view that good scholars are typically drawn to their field of inquiry by some puzzles or problems that seem difficult to solve, and I was wondering what, for her, those motivating problems were. At this point she calmed down a little and began to think. She had told me earlier of her academic training in sociology, which had focused on issues of caste-group relationships in rural areas. Now, she said, she would like to pursue similar issues in the medieval period, asking about the relationship between foreign Muslim elites from different origins and indigenous (converted) Indian Muslims. "This tension between the foreign nobility and the Indian nobility professing the same religion and never enjoying that dominance in the polity is something which really interests me . . . [And] when conversions take place and people do not move to the court circles, what kind of interaction is there between communities and how does that change over time or does it change over time? And under what pressures and compulsions does it change and how does it evolve?" I now saw a glimpse of another person: curious, lively, interested in historical complexity—a person, in the end, interested in the same things in which Thapar is interested, the heterogeneity of apparently monolithic groups, the complex movements and tensions among them. I concluded that Jain had scholarly passions, just not in the domain into which she had been thrust by politics—and thrust, it seems, because her sharp mind put her ahead of other in-house historians of the BJP. When writing her textbook, she had been encouraged to think that it is a mark of quality to have a fixed view and to dig in, rather than to have some curiosity about whether there are recalcitrant pieces of the evidence that have not yet been addressed.

Distinguished historical writing exposes tensions and internal conflicts—the "clashes within" a nation or region as class, ethnicity, religion, and gender play their roles in events. That sort of historical writing is helpful for politics because it encourages a society to scrutinize itself, asking what related tensions may be in play, and how some errors of the past might be avoided in dealing with them. When, by contrast, history is written as a mythic war between the pure forces of good and the forces of evil, the result is bound to be bad historical writing, because the world is not pure, and no culture is pure within it. When we look at the past through the lenses of such constructed history, we are soothed. We stop criticizing our own society, asking what tensions it contains; instead, we imagine that we can blame all our problems on outsiders. We are also encouraged not to scrutinize ourselves, asking ourselves what seeds of violence and domination our own lives contain. Instead, we are seductively led to imagine that we can blame all our problems on others. That is why the difference between the writings of Romila Thapar and Meenakshi Jain is important, and why it is a sign of Jain's quality that she cannot remain entirely comfortable with the role that has been assigned to her.

Shivaji: Emperor and Sacred Legend

The Hindu right was founded in the western state of Maharashtra (whose largest city is Mumbai, the former Bombay). Its leading ideologues were from that region, and even today Maharashtra remains a particular stronghold of various Hindu-right organizations. It is important to distinguish among these organizations. The RSS, we saw, is allied with but quite different from the VHP. Both are distinct from the local Maharashtrian movement known as Shiv Sena (named

not after the god Shiva, but after the hero Shivaji), led by Mumbai politician Bal Thackeray, a particularly undisciplined and thuggish group given to street fighting and powerful in local politics. The politics of the Hindu right in Maharashtra are thus complex, and groups do not always agree. Moreover, the intense politics of caste in the region at times supersedes the left-right divide. Maharashtra was long a highly Brahmin-dominated state, and Brahmins are still deeply resented there by people of lower castes. Anti-Brahmin politics is strong on both the right and the left, and often the Congress party competes for lower-caste votes by adopting policies that are similar to those of the BJP; often, too, the local Hindu right downplays some aspects of the national Hindu-right agenda that strike them as too brahminical.

It is within this context that one of the ugliest recent controversies over history has unfolded, that over James Laine's book, ***Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India.***[52] Shivaji is a hero for many Indians because he rose up against the power of the Moghul empire in the time of its most unpleasant and repressive ruler, Aurangzeb, winning important victories beginning in 1659 and establishing, at least in a part of India, a Hindu kingdom. His daring raids and narrow escapes made him a legend in his own time, and the legend has steadily grown. He is particularly loved in Maharashtra, but, as Nehru observed, "Shivaji did not belong to Maharashtra alone; he belonged to the whole Indian nation."[53] As a hero of Hindu resistance to Muslim rule, he is particularly loved by the Hindu right. The Bajrang Dal's website celebrates his birthday right next to its glorification of Nathuram Godse and just above a headline saying: "Islam the cult of cruelty, torture and sadism: Another reason why Islam Must be Crushed not only from India but the world."[54] Shivaji, however, is loved by many who do not share these politics, particularly as a non-Brahmin hero and one with whom lower castes in Maharashtra identify.

Laine's book is a study of the construction of the legend or legends of Shivaji as they reflect the social realities of their different times. He has less interest in documenting the particulars of Shivaji's life and his exploits, which are not all that controversial, than in examining the shape of the grand narratives. He focuses on the various heroic narratives and their social dimensions: How does a heroic legend get created, and how, through it, do various groups at different times seek to convey their cherished values? Significantly, Laine opens his account with criticism of his own American pride. As a child in Texas, he loved the story of Davy Crockett; he saw it as a simple tale of "good guys" and "bad guys" and "roamed the neighborhood in a coonskin cap, carrying a toy rifle, and singing, 'Davy, Davy Crockett, king of the wild frontier!'"[55] It never occurred to him then, he says, to wonder how the legend of Davy Crockett arose, or what version of the story Mexicans might have told to their children. His book is a related exercise in demystification—not de-heroization, for Laine genuinely admires Shivaji. But he wants to ask questions that hero-worshipping children don't ask, to understand the genesis of the story of a man who is supposed to be all things to all people. "Shivaji is brave, fair, and compassionate. He loves his mother. He is pious. He is patriotic." And, of course, for every good guy there must be a bad guy: Muslims in this story "can only play the role of aggressors, usurpers, and oppressors."[56] Laine believes, plausibly enough, that life is not this simple: that heroes are real people, who may have weaknesses and even flaws, and that it is more interesting to try to glimpse the human being beneath the myth than to rest content with an idealization. By looking at how the myth was constructed, we can perhaps also glimpse what it may have glossed over or omitted.

Laine's book has, then, a goal that might be described as political in a general sense: to give people a more complex version of history in which Hindus and Muslims need not be always seen as, respectively, blameless heroes and double-dyed villains, and in which the internal complexities of both Hindu and Islamic traditions and their many interactions are stressed. "I hope," he concludes, "that I can contribute in some way to a richer understanding of this great man, and rescue his biography from the grasp of those who see India as a Hindu nation at war with its Muslim neighbors."[57] The account as a whole conveys a sense that Shivaji was indeed a very remarkable man. What Laine does bring to light are some social tensions surrounding the idea that Shivaji was a hero for all Maharashtrians: different caste and class groups compete to claim him.

In his final chapter, called "Cracks in the Narrative," Laine asks whether there may be some problematic aspects of Shivaji's life that are alluded to but glossed over in *all* the narratives we have. He focuses on

Shivaji's relationship with his father, Shahji. The sources make clear that Shivaji distanced himself early on from his father's tolerant attitude to Muslim rule and to the practice of cow-slaughter. He announces that even if his father "abandons" him on account of his defense of the cow, he will not mind. Even as a boy, according to the sources, Shivaji was quite distant from his father, who seems to have been around only very rarely. He lived with his famous mother, Jijabai, and it seems that Jijabai's parents never accepted the husband, who was according to some accounts not as aristocratic as the wife. The fatherly role of instructor to the young man was filled, during Shahji's prolonged absences, by a guardian, Brahmin Dadaji Konddev. Up to this point, we are on the terrain of acknowledged fact.

Laine goes on to say that this is a problem in the young man's life that the sources mention, but from which they immediately shy away: there was family discord, and he had an absentee father. Then come the sentences that have made Laine a marked man in at least two countries: "The repressed awareness that Shivaji had an absentee father is also revealed by the fact that Maharashtrians tell jokes naughtily suggesting that his guardian Dadaji Konddev was his biological father."[58] (Laine tells me that according to his notes he heard these jokes in 1987; some of his critics have agreed that Brahmins do tell jokes like this, as a strategy to co-opt the hero.) Laine himself does not accept this account and makes it clear that it is a piece of malicious gossip. (Since the book's publication, he has gone further, stating that he believes that the rumor is false.) He goes on to say that what is important is to see that Shivaji developed an unusually deep bond with his mother because of the father's absence, and that his "drive to heroism was spurred by his attempt to please his doting mother," while the mother, whose husband was of lower birth, focused her dreams of status and rule upon her son.[59] Far from endorsing the rumor, Laine suggests that the significant factors lie elsewhere, in the exclusive and doting relationship between mother and son.

On account of his remark, taken out of context, Laine's book was banned in Maharashtra and eventually in all India. A collaborator of his was assaulted by members of the Shiv Sena and his face painted black. A brigade of Hindu thugs calling itself the Sambhaji Brigade (Sambhaji is the name of Shivaji's son) burst into the library where Laine did his research, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune (acknowledged in the book's opening credits), smashed windows and doors, set things on fire, and ended up damaging books and priceless manuscripts.[60] The chief minister of Maharashtra defended the ban on the book, saying that "the government would not tolerate any insult of Shivaji."[61] People thanked by Laine in the preface of his book were immediately given police guards. One of these, author Dilip Chitre, a non-Brahmin, wrote that this kind of antischolarship terrorism undermines "two things that most of us naively take for granted: that we are a civil society with a will not only to survive but to thrive without fear, and that our democratic republic is real after 54 years of existence as a printed book."[62] Oxford University Press temporarily closed its Mumbai office.

Laine both issued an apology for any offense he had given and explained that his book was a study of stories, not of the life of Shivaji himself. Nonetheless he was charged with disturbing the peace, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Murli Manohar Joshi, the national minister of education, condemned the attack on the institute but said that Laine's book was equally deplorable.[63] Prime Minister Vajpayee, despite initially opposing the Maharashtrian ban on the book, later endorsed a nationwide ban. As the national election campaign heated up, he announced that he would call in Interpol to arrest Laine in the United States. Meanwhile the president of the BJP in Maharashtra called for a similar ban on Nehru's *Discovery of India,* claiming that its portrait of Shivaji was not sufficiently laudatory.[64] (Nehru's book was not banned.) Although Laine has been neither arrested nor harmed, the charges against him drag on in his absence; the book remains banned. He continues to receive hate mail from unknown sources.

Most of the people involved in the controversy had not read Laine's book; they therefore did not know that the book is highly laudatory of Shivaji and that its focus is on studying the creation of his legend. They also seemed unaware that Laine had merely mentioned a rumor or joke about Shivaji's mother without endorsing it. But Shivaji is a hero of almost divine status, and the reaction is rather like the reaction that Tom Lehrer received when he made rude jokes about the Mass in his song "The Vatican Rag." Impugning Jijabai's marital purity, even in jest, is considered insulting, so sacred is the object. It is not surprising that

someone should be offended by this sort of remark; what is surprising is that a government would accede to the demand to ban a work of scholarship on this account and would not do more to protect those involved from violence.

The uproar is also about sex. The idea of respectable masculinity is deeply important to Hindus today, not only on the right. Part of nationalism is a sharply etched conception of the proper (aggressive) male, and that male must be sharply contrasted with the (ideally pure) female. To suggest that Shivaji is an illegitimate child of a lonely mother, without a proper father, seems deeply threatening; even more threatening is the suggestion of sexual impurity in the revered Jijabai, mother of the nation. One of the lengthiest hate missives received by Laine shows this underlying notion very clearly: sexual impurity is outside India, and India is a land of pure women.[65] Its author projects onto Laine and his fellow nationals (the author seems to believe that Laine is British) all the disgusting traits of sexuality that he claims to be absent in India, especially female impurity and male promiscuity. The greedy British, "thieves" of Indian wealth, are portrayed as foul, dirty, sexually rapacious—rather as Muslims are typically portrayed in Hindu-right propaganda. India itself is a realm of purity, but it is also a compromised and humiliated realm. The solution to this abject condition lies in violence.

There is another dimension to the Laine affair that has been ignored by all who see it as yet one more example of the excesses of the Hindu right: caste. The Bhandarkar Institute, where Laine did his research, is widely perceived as a Brahmin-dominated place where lower-caste scholars are not welcome. The Sambhaji Brigade (a rather progressive lower-caste group) very likely had a picture of the elite foreigner Laine hobnobbing with the Brahmins, cooking up plots to defame a lower-caste hero, to insult the morals of a non-Brahmin woman, and, even worse, to make out that the hero's real father was actually a Brahmin.[66] This dimension of caste politics makes all the subsequent reactions to Laine's book more complicated, including the national reactions. Not even the Maharashtra Congress Party stood up for Laine; indeed it was competing for lower-caste votes at the time, like all the rest. Laine agrees that the caste issue is of central importance: "There is a legitimate grievance on the part of the Maratha community . . . that for

whatever reason there are a lot of people who feel shut out of the conversation and generally people shut out of a conversation at some point will turn to violence." He distinguishes between people who genuinely felt insulted and upset and people who engaged in a "callous manipulation" of these sentiments for political purposes.[67]

Also contributing to Laine's predicament is the fact that India's protections for freedom of speech are relatively weak. Article 19 protects the right to "freedom of speech and expression," but it also states that "reasonable restrictions" may be made in connection with security, "public order, decency or morality." Blasphemy laws exist, and were used when India was the first nation to ban Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. The latest book by controversial Bangladeshi feminist Taslima Nasrin, which makes unpleasant allegations about Muslim leaders, has been banned in West Bengal. One can see why the inflammatory would be feared, in a nation that has seen so much religious violence. The way in which book-banning is used as a political football, however, surely shows the wisdom of a more protective standard, such as the U.S. idea that the threat to public order must be "imminent" to justify the restriction of speech. Certainly the conclusion that Laine's speech can be banned because hooligans attacked the Bhandarkar Institute steps over a line that one would want to draw.

James Laine is a very affable man. Among all the scholars I interviewed for this chapter, he is the most genial and relaxed, and perhaps the only one who has not lost his sense of humor. He seems not at all obsessed with his own drama, and indeed cannot recall the details of his legal situation in India or the nature of his contract with Oxford University Press. Sitting in a small office in the Religion Department of Macalester College, a fine liberal arts institution in the semi-urban surroundings of St. Paul, Minnesota, he was the laid-back Texan described in the book: large, loose-jointed body; red hair and beard; feet on the desk. When I visited his class to talk about women and law in India, I found a highly multicultural group of some twenty students, with people of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and other origins made to feel relaxed and at home. In the best U.S. tradition of liberal arts teaching, Laine teaches by eliciting. Students sit in a circle, and each class begins by going round the room as every student gives a brief reaction to the readings for the day. I found the students lively, inquiring, well pre-

pared, not afraid of argument and debate, and clearly pleased with Laine's respectful, warm manner. He imparts a lot of information in a low-key way; he's very funny, and nobody is bored. (In teaching, too, the Gandhian issues arise: an anxious desire for domination that is somewhere in most, if not all, of us has to be struggled against for the sake of both truth and respect.)

When he talked to me later about the events surrounding him, Laine conveyed an extraordinary degree of calm and even of empathy, which he is able to use to regain perspective and distance fear. Indeed his greatest concern, as I interviewed him, was to get me to understand how the lower-caste Maharashtrians feel about the Brahmins, how they must feel that yet another oppressor is coming to mock and denigrate them by denigrating the one hero who has stood up for them. In that context, he found it interesting that the hate mail typically assumed that he is British or referred to American abuse of power. He told me that he did not regret making the controversial statement, because he thinks that such gaps in a historical narrative should be probed and that it is a good thing to get people asking questions. But he showed great sympathy with the reactions, even the threatening ones (though not the violence itself), because he can imagine how the repeated experience of insult and humiliation would lead people to misperceive his own intentions. He tries to treat his interlocutors with respect, and at least sometimes he gets through:

> I did get an e-mail yesterday; some guy in Bombay said, "You really hurt our feelings." And I just wrote back saying, "I'm really sorry about that, but let me assure you that in my mind, Shahaji was Shivaji's father, there is no question about that," but I thought it was interesting to talk about the whole relationship of his parents. And he wrote back saying, "Thank you so much for that clarification, let's stay friends forever"—a very sweet and simple thing.

Hindu Religion in U.S. Universities: "Wendy's Children"

Up to this point, the attacks on scholars that we have studied are Indian attacks, closely connected to Indian politics. Now we move to a new domain and a slightly different, though related, set of issues. The study of comparative religion and the history of religions is not a serious academic subject in India. One does not find departments of religious studies, in part because the humanities are in general not well supported, in part because religion is just not seen as something to be studied historically and comparatively. Some work of the sort that is familiar in the United States can be found in Indian departments of philosophy or literature; this disciplinary placement, however, already shifts the nature of the scholarship away from the comparative and historical study of religious practices and texts as such.

In the United States, by contrast, comparative religious studies are flourishing, and for some time the study of Indian religions has been a prominent topic of high-level scholarship. The great Sanskritist Daniel Ingalls, who taught for many years at Harvard University, trained several generations of scholars, including Wendy Doniger of the University of Chicago and Sheldon Pollock, who recently moved to Columbia University from the University of Chicago. Ingalls's knowledge of Vedic and of classical Sanskrit was impeccable, his sense of poetry highly refined. He also cooperated with linguists such as Calvert Watkins and Jochem Schindler, who brought to the enterprise an analytical and comparative dimension. Since Ingalls's retirement, the most important centers of ancient Indian textual and religious study have been the University of Chicago and Columbia University.

Most of the people who currently play leading roles in the study of ancient Hinduism and related textual studies are not Indians or Indian Americans, because very few Indian Americans were in the United States at the time when people now in their fifties and sixties would have been in graduate school. The younger generation has a greater ethnic mixture, as does the population. Few Indian scholars trained in India who now teach in the United States teach the history of Indian religions, because that subject does not exist as such in India.

In the early 1970s, when many of today's leading American scholars of Indian languages and religions did their graduate work, most of them were drawn to India by a sheer fascination with and love of its culture. Sometimes this love was combined, in the tumult of those times, with a repudiation of elements of U.S. culture. Many young Americans focused on India because they thought of it as more peace-

ful, more sensuous, compatible with a politics based on love rather than military might. The Beatles, with their embrace of Indian music and their politics of love and quietism, encouraged such perceptions. Of course few of these young Americans stayed on to become serious scholars of ancient languages, but those who did often shared those cultural sympathies. Ingalls himself was far from having a countercultural sensibility; a wealthy, aristocratic man, he simply loved ancient Indian poetry. Some of his students, however, partook of the culture of their times, combining opposition to the Vietnam War and a search for nonpuritanical sexual norms with the praise of India.[68]

Such attitudes can lead to certain overemphases and distortions: one may exaggerate that which is different, and underplay that which is similar. The most salient example of distortion has been a relative neglect of India's critical and rationalistic traditions in portrayals of Hinduism and a corresponding overemphasis on the mystical.[69] After all, the Enlightenment and its legacy was just what many young American scholars wanted to escape, connecting it, rightly or wrongly, with the militarism and aggressiveness that they repudiated. It is not clear how deep a criticism this is, since work of first-rate quality was being done on these aspects of Hindu traditions in the English-speaking world, particularly by the great scholar Bimal Krishna Matilal, Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University until his tragic premature death in 1991. Matilal (himself a student of Ingalls) devoted his career to demonstrating that Indian philosophy is fully as rigorous and rational as comparable parts of Western philosophy; he trained gifted students who continue his work.[70]

The Hindu right, however, has not charged U.S. Hinduism studies with underplaying Indian rationalism, possibly because practicing Hindus in the United States would not be very excited by such a charge. It is difficult to imagine scholars getting death threats because they neglect ancient logic, or antirelativist arguments in ethics. The general tenor of the attack is very different. The story that circulates is that these American scholars are obsessed with the sexual and are disrespectful of Indian religious traditions. Led by Doniger, who is portrayed as a woman unduly focused on topics of sexuality, a whole group of young scholars, mostly male—"Wendy's children," to paraphrase the title of the broadside by Rajiv Malhotra ("Wendy's Child Syn-

drome") that began the current war—go around searching for ways to defame and degrade sacred Hindu traditions by portraying them as all about sex. Doniger's students are described as a "large cult" who "glorify her in exchange for her mentorship."[71] Hindu Americans are encouraged by Malhotra and his allies to feel that they and their traditions are being insulted by disdainful colonial usurpers, much in the way that the British had shown disdain for Hindu traditions, often by focusing on sexual matters.

The tacit assumption behind these attacks is that sex has about it something shameful and nonrespectable, and that it is thus degrading to the Hindu gods to connect them with sex or to impute sexual doings to them. (Thus, to take a representative example, Vishal Agarwal called Courtright's sober narration of the sexual myths surrounding Ganesha "extremely obscene.")[72] This assumption is not shared by Doniger, Courtright, Jeffrey Kripal, or any of the other scholars currently under attack. As Doniger puts it, "the idea is that I have a dirty mind, I have been writing dirty books," and that these books make Hinduism look bad, meaning dirty.[73] Here we see a classic case of the linkage between emerging nationalism and (a narrow conception of) sexual respectability, a conception that all the attacked scholars would reject as a distortion of human value and human life. Indeed, many of these scholars sought out the Hindu tradition because of discontents with Judaism and Christianity. In the case of Doniger, the idea that sex is a glorious and central part of human life and that Hinduism is perhaps the only world religion that has duly respected and attended to it is central to her engagement with the texts. Far from defaming or degrading, she aims to show what is of deep human value in a tradition she loves.

The chief antagonist behind these attacks is Rajiv Malhotra, a very wealthy man who lives in New Jersey and heads the Infinity Foundation, which has made grants in the area of Hinduism studies. Had Malhotra decided to focus his energies on giving scholarships to students and graduate students in this area, he would greatly have enhanced the profile of Hinduism studies nationally. But in recent years most of his energy has been focused on Internet attacks against Doniger and scholars associated with her, on his website sulekha.com. Malhotra's voluminous writings show a highly aggressive, threatening

personality. His attacks are sarcastic and intemperate. He shows little concern about factual accuracy. Typically he makes no attempt to describe the book or books he attacks in a complete or balanced way; instead, his broadsides are lists of alleged mistakes or distortions, conveying little or no sense of what the book is about and what it argues. Malhotra also has associates, some both more able and more temperate than he (Vishal Agarwal is one of these). But all pursue a common enterprise: the discrediting of American scholars of Hinduism as sex-crazed defamers of sacred traditions.

This agenda looks somewhat like that of the Hindu right in India; but it is not exactly the same agenda, since it has no overt connection to national identity. Perhaps at a psychological level Malhotra's attacks work by appealing to the diaspora community's sense of nationalism-at-a-distance and to its vulnerability, as a group trying to establish itself in American society, thus highly conscious of issues of respectability and of the earlier British critique of Hindu values. But Malhotra has denied any political affiliation with the Hindu right in India, and his goal would seem to be a rather different one: to change the course of the teaching of Hinduism in U.S. colleges and universities, making sure that it is taught by Indian Americans who share his particular sense of religious orthodoxy. I have noticed that there are ties of friendship and mutual support between the Malhotra group and people in India who attack historians such as Thapar. Vishal Agarwal, for example, has a close working relationship with Meenakshi Jain, and wrote a foreword to her online defense of her textbook. Ramesh Rao, who has links to Malhotra and has written attacks on Laine and Courtright,[74] also has sympathetic connections with BJP politicians and is writing a book on Godhra. A Bajrang Dal/VHP website that focuses on Indian politics and glorifies Godse also contains a link to a story titled "Eggs Thrown at Anti-Hindu Wendy Doniger in U.K."[75] The two agendas, however, remain distinct.

The prevailing ethos of pluralism and ethnic respect in U.S. universities has made American scholars highly vulnerable, subjectively, to Malhotra's attack: they seem to have felt something like guilt that they might have offended people from another culture. The idea that Western people should not write about Hindu texts was one that they easily took to heart; their pain led to earnest attempts to convince him of their goodwill. They thought he had simply made a mistake about their motives and character, and that if they showed him their true love of Hinduism and engaged with him respectfully, he would change his tone. They also seemingly felt what one Indian visitor (at a conference on these issues at the Esalen Institute in December 2004) called the pain of "the rejected lover": having sought out India because they fell in love with her culture, they are deeply and unusually pained by any rejection coming from an Indian source. Although it would have been right to ignore Malhotra until he was willing to engage in civil and respectful debate, they did not ignore him, and they are paying the price now, in a mental obsession with this unpleasant man.

Doniger would be widely and enthusiastically agreed to be one of America's major scholars in the humanities, wide-ranging, unusually imaginative and poetic, capable of illuminating fundamental issues through a deft use of comparative analysis. She is altogether different from Romila Thapar in personality, scholarly strengths, and methodology; both, however, are of similar distinction, and they are the two among the attacked scholars who are likely to be remembered in the next generation. For this reason, Doniger's writings are typically not attacked directly. For example, her landmark translation of and commentary on the ***Kama Sutra***, surely her bestselling book, has not been criticized at all,[76] and it would have been very difficult to do so, since the usual trope of saying that references to sex have been imported by the author's prurient imagination could not have worked here!

Doniger's joie de vivre, humor, and earthiness—combined with a beautiful, deep voice and an imposing physique—make her a natural target for the combination of innuendo and sexism that many of the attacks on her display. She is a sui generis combination of the delicate and the vulgar: she can imitate Mae West, and yet she has insights of the greatest refinement and subtlety. Malhotra's portrayal of Doniger as a Circe who bewitches young male scholars and turns them into anti-Hindu swine is clever because it has superficial plausibility, in a world in which a woman with a frank interest in the sexual is still all too often regarded as a bad woman. His attacks' focus on Doniger's students does not prevent her from receiving a lot of hate mail and encountering repeated heckling during discussions after her lectures. (The message conveyed, she tells me, is typically that "these texts are really for Hindu

males and you are a two-time loser, and I will now tell you what Hindu males think about this.")[77]

Nor did her high scholarly reputation stop someone from throwing an egg at her during a lecture in London in November 2003. During the lecture Doniger drew attention to a passage in the *Ramayana* in which Lakshmana, Rama's loyal friend, refuses to answer Rama's call for help, and his wife, Sita, says that he is doing so because he desires her. Doniger simply quoted the relevant sentences from the text. Subsequent e-mail attacks focused on that part of the lecture: critics did not deny that the text said what Doniger quoted, but instead complained "that I had pulled out things from the tradition that none of them knew. That was a bad thing not a good thing."

The most intense and sustained attacks, however, have been reserved for Jeffrey Kripal, a former student of Doniger's, and Paul Courtright, who did not study with her but acknowledges her influence and friendship. Kripal's book *Kali's Child* (for which Doniger wrote a foreword) was the occasion for the opening salvo in Malhotra's article "Wendy's Children Syndrome."[78] Kripal studied the role of mystical and erotic elements in the life and teaching of Ramakrishna, the nineteenth-century Bengali holy man. He drew on a diary of Ramakrishna's that had previously been published only in part, in a version edited by Ramakrishna's own disciples, who, it emerges, had omitted many sexual and scatological references. Drawing on the entire text, Kripal argued that the holy man's mysticism contained marked homoerotic elements. A storm immediately broke out, involving both the disciples of Ramakrishna in Kolkata and, somewhat later, Malholtra and his group in the United States. (Here there is a transcontinental linkage, but not to the BJP, which is not particularly connected to the Ramakrishna group.) The disciples' indignation was predictable: a revered man was being said to have homosexual tendencies. They disapproved of such tendencies (although Kripal does not), so they disliked the imputation. For Malhotra, the book was a salient example of Western scholars smearing a revered icon of the Hindu tradition with their dirty American sexual fantasies.

The debate about Kripal's book concerns details of translation and interpretation of difficult Bengali words and phrases. It seems likely that the critics have raised a number of good points about particular issues, and Kripal himself, an undogmatic scholar, has in some cases changed his view. But what can be said with confidence is that nobody has shown that the book was not a major contribution to the analysis of Ramakrishna's mysticism. Certainly Kripal has shown that the disciples concealed important material; he has brought this material to light so that scholars can debate it. That itself is a major contribution, for which Kripal's book has won widespread admiration, both in the United States and in India. He has also shown that Ramakrishna's mysticism is powerfully erotic. By bringing this aspect to light, Kripal has promoted informed comparison of Hindu mysticism with other mystical traditions. Since Ramakrishna lived an ascetic life in a community of male disciples, apart from women, it would be hardly surprising if his erotic imagery were indeed homoerotic.

Many points in Kripal's book might be debated calmly and reasonably. Instead, after being attacked by Malhotra with over-the-top scorn and aggressiveness, Kripal received death threats, and there was a serious attempt to get Rice University, which was in the process of hiring him, to withdraw its offer. (The attempt failed.) Kripal, whom Doniger describes as "traumatized" by his experience, now pursues his interest in the history of mysticism without reference to India.

A more general issue that has been raised against all of "Wendy's children" is their use of Freud in analyzing Indian texts. The attack takes several forms. One version says that Freud is Western, and therefore inappropriate for the analysis of Indian texts. A second version says that Freud is unscientific and has been discredited. A third (common in postlecture heckling) is to ask the scholar whether he or she actually is a psychoanalyst, and to suggest that without professional analytic credentials that scholar has no business using Freud's work. The first charge raises interesting and complicated issues about cross-cultural interpretation, which Malhotra and his followers seem to have no serious interest in discussing. It is certainly right to ask whether and on what grounds it would be appropriate to interpret any text not produced in post-Freudian Europe with reference to Freudian concepts; rich debates on this topic go on in scholarship on ancient Greece, and no doubt in many other fields. To raise the question, however, is not to suggest that there can be no answer. Freud had access to deep insights about the personality, which, if applied with sufficient delicacy and cau-

tion, can prove illuminating in other contexts. Indeed, in India itself, Freudian interpretation flourishes and is not very controversial. (Sudhir Kakar, the leading Indian psychoanalytic writer, tells me that he is never criticized in India for his use of Freud to analyze myth or even contemporary political events.)[79]

More generally, one can pose such questions about so many interpretive guides who are used today to illuminate texts in a variety of cultures: Marx, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Foucault. The enterprise of drawing on one of these texts to illuminate aspects of a culture that did not read that author is inherently comparative, even when both the text and the culture are "Western." Should one analyze the global economy with the Aristotelian concepts of capability and functioning, as I do? Should one look at China with the concepts of Marx? the ancient Greek world with the Foucauldian concept of power? the history of Christianity with Nietzsche's concept of genealogy? All these questions need reflection; a good scholar will embark on such comparative interpretations with sensitivity and awareness of possible pitfalls. Sometimes the "guide" seems less interesting than the text it is used to interpret, and impoverishes the text in consequence. But surely the suggestion of Malhotra and company that comparative scholarship is inherently bad and distorting is not sustainable. Indeed, whether or not one uses a guide such as Freud or Aristotle or Nietzsche, scholarship about the past is always interpretive and a matter of delicate translation from one milieu's notions to those of another.

As for the second and third charges: some people do indeed believe that modern scientific advances have displaced Freud, but many do not. Especially in the humanities, scholars continue to use Freudian ideas as a source of humanistic insight, which was always their strongest claim to importance. There seems to be no more reason to think that science has displaced Freud than to think that it has displaced Plato, or poetry, or music.

Should one be a professional analyst to use Freud's ideas? Not only does the scholarly world reject that claim; so, too, does the psychoanalytic profession. I am a member of the Board of the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis, along with several other scholars in the humanities, precisely because the profession wants to encourage scholars in the humanities to get more involved with psychoanalysis and to use its

concepts more often in their work. That was explicitly the case that was made when I was invited to join the board. Psychoanalytic journals routinely publish, and indeed solicit, work by friendly scholars in other fields.[80] The attackers seem, then, to know little about humanities scholarship and still less about the standards and practices of contemporary psychoanalysis.

As to the more general charge that "insiders to the tradition" are being marginalized in favor of Westerners who impose their own ideology,[81] we should at all times remember how complicated the question of "insider" status is. Certainly being Indian American, or Hindu, or even Indian is no guarantee of any superior knowledge of the ancient texts of the Hindu religious tradition. Few young people in India, and very few young Indian Americans, even study these texts, much less learn their original languages. Malhotra gives no evidence of knowing Vedic or classical Sanskrit. Vishal Agarwal, who writes the more detailed and learned attacks, is by his own account self-taught in Sanskrit; he has a demanding job in business that occupies most of his time. As for the idea that being a worshiper in a given religious tradition provides "insider knowledge," being a worshiper both reveals and conceals. Believing Christians and Jews are not always the best historical scholars of their own religions, since they may not be willing to press certain questions, and they have all too obvious a stake in making things come out the way they like them from the point of view of their own worship. Thus, Christian and Jewish feminists often underplay or even deny the evidence of misogyny in their own traditions, because they want to preserve the tradition for the purposes of women's worship. There are many such examples.

One further reason for the animosity to Freudian interpretation of Hindu religion lies in the more general shame about sexuality and its varied delights and vulnerabilities that these attacks so amply attest.

Paul Courtright has been in greater danger, it seems, than any of the other scholars. A soft-spoken and gentle man with a steely backbone, he did not sit around worrying after receiving several thousand threatening e-mails. He called the FBI. So far the FBI has investigated the most threatening messages, and the investigation continues. Courtright's house and family have been under guard. With support from his department, the Religion Department at Emory, and the uni-

versity itself, Courtright has so far successfully stood up to the opposition, and has responded to it in a lecture titled "Studying Religion in an Age of Terror."[82] Wherever a lecture by Courtright is announced, protests are made, and extra security measures need to be taken.

What is Courtright's alleged offense? In 1985 he published a dense, scholarly tome called *Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings*.[83] The book is a detailed study of myths concerning the elephant-headed god, from the fifth to the eighteenth centuries, and the cultic practices concerning him, from different times and places. Courtright then studies the Ganesha stories with reference to major themes in Hindu religion, particularly sacrifice and initiation. He also includes a detailed study of the worship of Ganesha in Maharashtra, in order to give an example of the regional inflection of common traditions. *Ganesa* is not a flamboyant book; it is written in dense scholarly prose, thick with references to primary texts, often in Courtright's own translations. Courtright is not Doniger's student, but she supplied a foreword for the book, and the two remain close scholarly colleagues.[84]

The book was widely praised. It became a well-regarded standard source. It won the American Council of Learned Societies prize for the best first book in the history of religions. For many years nobody worried about it. In 2000 Courtright was approached by a leading Indian publisher who wanted to bring out a reprint of the book in India at a moderate price. (Imported books are often inordinately expensive for Indian buyers.) The next year he received the Indian edition in the mail. The publishers had chosen a new image of Ganesha for the cover. The old one showed Ganesha with potbelly, elephant head, and dancing feet; the genitals were in shadow. The new one, a photograph of a bronze sculpture of the god from central India, showed him with a child's body and a little boy's penis; the god is wearing armor on his head, and is leaning on the ground, in a pose that takes considerable strength to sustain. Thus the image is both more childlike and more military than the old one. Courtright says that he himself would not have chosen the image had he known about it, because it is not a typical image of the god.[85] Neither the old image nor the new one, we might add, conforms to a common image of the god circulated by the Hindu right, which shows Ganesha standing with one fist in the air and a sword held aloft in his other hand; the traditional potbelly has been replaced by a "six-pack" of muscles.

The Ganesha story is full of sex, and Courtright sets out frankly the stories of copulation that the tradition offers. In one chapter he focuses on aspects of the myth that show conflict between Ganesha and his father, Shiva, for the attention of mother Parvati. Courtright interprets these stories in keeping with the idea of oedipal conflict, saying that the myth can help us understand conflicts that exist in many if not most human families, because it "reflects the unconscious ambivalences of early forgotten childhood experience." To the extent to which it explores such material, the myth "reaches beyond its Indian context and takes on universal meaning and appeal."[86] (At this point Courtright draws on similar insights about Ganesha in Sudhir Kakar's work.)

Courtright also draws attention to the contrast between the highly phallic Shiva and the potbellied Ganesha, with his child's body and genitals and his love of sweets. The myth does clearly depict Ganesha as sexually childlike, and usually as celibate; Courtright suggests that Ganesha's close and tender relationship with his mother has led him to try to remain close to her by never growing up. His insatiable appetite for sweets may be a compensation for never reaching phallic adulthood.[87] At this point Courtright cites a previous South Asian interpreter, the distinguished anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere, who argues that Ganesha's celibacy, like his broken tusk, is a punishment for his incestuous fixation on his mother. (Obeyesekere grew up in Sri Lanka, but the culture of Sri Lanka is quite continuous with that of South India.)

There is no reason why an American scholar cannot by himself or herself develop an adequate understanding of another culture. There is also no reason to suppose that birth within a culture automatically confers understanding. But it is interesting to observe that the two most controversial interpretations in Courtright's book, interpretations that are attacked as being crude products of the Western colonial imagination, in fact originated with two of South Asia's most venerated scholars.

Malhotra's characterization of Courtright's conclusions is wildly inaccurate: "Ganesha's trunk symbolizes a 'limp phallus'; his broken tusk [is] a symbol for the castration-complex of the Hindu male; his large belly is a proof of the Hindu male's enormous appetite for oral sex . . . Siva is interpreted as a womanizer, who encourages ritual rape, prostitution, and murder, and his worship is linked to violence and destruc-

tion."[88] Malhotra also describes the book as an "undergraduate textbook," conveying the misleading impression that it would be used in introductory courses for students. In fact it is too dense and dry to be used in any such way. There is nothing in Courtright's book about the "Hindu male's enormous appetite for oral sex" or about the "castration-complex of the Hindu male." Courtright does indeed suggest that the broken tusk is a sexual wounding, by contrast to Shiva's triumphant sexuality, and that the trunk ought to be seen in contrast to Shiva's erect phallus, which of course is ubiquitously represented in the context of Shiva worship. He uses these insights, however, not to make any claims about Indian males, but to show us how a myth from a different culture may give us access to universal human fears, vulnerabilities, and fantasies. (Malhotra's reading is interesting evidence of what people are anxious about. They don't want a playful, childlike god with a small, child's penis; now he has to be a phallic warrior.)

Whether such a shared domain of emotion and fantasy exists may of course be contested; but any possibility of cross-cultural understanding (including understanding of ancient India by modern India) depends on something *like* this being available. We are all dark to one another; a sister to a brother, a parent to a child. Understanding across differences of time and/or place is difficult, but so, too, is understanding across differences of personality or profession, or across jealousies and angers such as inhabit any close-knit group. If it is really true that no "outsider" may understand the myths and longings of a group, no matter how much learning and good-faith effort he or she expends, then we are all doomed to mutual incomprehension. Perhaps even self-understanding would then be impossible, since we all frequently feel like outsiders in relation to our own childhoods, or our previous relationships, or even some of our current longings and strivings. Malhotra seems inspired by a fantasy of effortless transparency: just be a member of the religious tradition (no matter how long-lived, no matter how multifaceted), and you can comprehend everything in that tradition. (He does not apply even that standard consistently: when a student of Doniger's is Indian American, he just says that the person has been co-opted.)[89] All understanding, including self-understanding, involves decipherment and interpretation. In the inaccuracy and haste with which he characterizes the work of others, Malhotra shows his unwillingness to expend the intellectual effort required for this sort of understanding.

Vishal Agarwal has written a much more informed attack on Courtright on Malhotra's website.[90] Approximately a hundred pages long, the review engages in detail with specific passages in the book, and its tone, though influenced by Malhotra's, is more courteous. Yet the piece is a paradigm of the bad book review. It proposes a list of alleged mistakes without describing the book in a fair and balanced way, showing its aims from the author's own viewpoint, or describing its major conclusions. The last portion of the long document contains a bizarre defense of the Indian publisher's withdrawal of the book, in which Agarwal accuses not the publisher, not the people who threatened the author with death, but Doniger and others who called for a boycott of the publisher, in essence issuing a "mullah's call for fatwa." Whereas many of the death threats against Courtright do express the wish that Hinduism had the concept of the *fatwa*, and connect this wish closely to a wish for Courtright's death, a boycott is a nonviolent protest movement that is in no way incompatible with freedom of speech or academic freedom. When students boycott Nike in order to alter its labor practices, or Nestlé in order to alter its practice of discouraging breastfeeding in developing countries, they do not violate either law or generally accepted ethical norms. This last section of Agarwal's review shows a lack of understanding of basic ethical and legal notions.

On balance, one has to hold Malhotra and even Agarwal partially accountable for the widespread misunderstanding of Courtright's book and its basic intentions, a misunderstanding that has led to the violent threats against him. Neither Agarwal nor Malhotra supports this violence; and yet their irresponsible characterizations of other people's work have done much to foster a climate in which such threats can be made. We can only hope that the threats remain just that.

The scholars who have been attacked have been personally traumatized, inevitably with some lasting effect. The more established they are, however, the less they will be affected. Doniger will probably continue to write much as before; Kripal has shifted his field of research; one young female scholar, ridiculed by Malhotra, left academia; another young female scholar moved from research into academic ad-

ministration, as a direct result of attacks on her and her associates. Courtright is now so occupied in dealing with the safety of his family and with the FBI that work on his next project will very likely be delayed. Worse still, however, is the impact of these attacks on young scholars who have not yet chosen a dissertation topic or even, perhaps, a field of study. Graduate students are deterred from writing on topics made controversial by Malhotra's attacks. The Hindu right in India has had the same chilling effect on scholarship on other topics, particularly archaeology and art history. Talented people who observe this state of affairs may choose to study some other religion and not Hinduism in the first place. Why spend years learning difficult ancient languages when you are likely to get only threats as a reward for your pains?

The attacks on Laine, Kripal, and especially Courtright raise classic issues of academic freedom. The VHP-related network of student groups called the Hindu Students Council has repeatedly sought to have Courtright's university (Emory) deny him the right to teach Hinduism; they also attempt to disrupt his visiting lectures. And of course the threat of violence is a huge threat to academic freedom. Malhotra's supporters, however, simply wave this issue away. Here is what Ramesh Rao has to say: "Courtright's, Laine's, and other scholars' peevish claims about academic freedom do not stand close scrutiny. To argue for the right of such egregious and idiosyncratic interpretations, without careful vetting by internal critics, and without concern for other people's right to their symbols and practices, is merely an argument for slander in the guise of scholarship."[91]

By "internal critics" Rao means not the usual academic process of peer review prior to publication—which both Courtright and Laine passed through, and Malhotra's self-published online writings did not—but "vetting" by people whom Malhotra considers fit representatives of Hindu traditions, whether they have any scholarly credentials or not. He and his group are self-appointed judges of who is "internal" (recall that they do not accept Indian Americans who study at the University of Chicago); they have their own view of what the tradition must and can be, which they are prepared to use as a litmus test, no matter what the evidence says. Here we see a true disregard for the usual canons of argument and scholarship, a postmodern power play in the guise of a defense of a tradition. It is obvious that the attacked

scholars have never denied anybody the "right" to anything, much less their symbols and practices. Instead, they have soberly put forward views based on evidence and employing arguments of the usual sort. They have always been open to debate and criticism, when it is carried on with civility. One might respond to them with argument, as does Vishal Agarwal; but this is a very different matter from saying that they have no right to teach and publish.

Why would anyone take Rao's argument seriously? In a culture in which minorities are sensitive to past bigotry and offense, people in the formerly dominant and bigoted group are now bending over backward to avoid giving offense. Sometimes this emphasis on nonoffensiveness may lead them to soften the demands of academic freedom, holding that speech that offends should be prohibited on campuses. Debates over campus "hate speech" codes show that many well-meaning people are prepared to go overboard in a way that threatens the very heart of academic freedom—prohibiting not just threats and insults targeting an individual, which is at least plausible and defensible, but seeking to prohibit, as well, speech that offends feminists, gays, and so forth. This is the debate into which Rao is inserting himself, and he is saying that Courtright and others so offend his community that they should not be permitted to express those views on campus.

There are indeed some limits to what should be taught. Rao cites the example of Holocaust-deniers to bolster his case. And of course it is true that Holocaust-deniers would not be hired in history departments; nor, probably, would people who espouse the anti-Semitic views contained in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. But these views are not just controversial; they are false. The Holocaust did take place; the protocols are full of lies about Jews. So one can defend the nonhiring of Holocaust-deniers without thereby granting that universities should not hire people whose interpretations and opinions, in controversial matters, offend some religious believers. Laine is right to say that in scholarship about religion, everyone knows that believers will be offended by a lot of what scholars say.[92] There would be no academic study of religion, however, if the giving of offense were disqualifying. Often, moreover, as Laine also remarks, a sign of important work is its ability to upset people who are used to seeing things another way. Academic freedom protects, and should protect, anyone, however of-

fensive his or her work, who has passed the usual forms of quality and accuracy-based assessment—even in initial hiring, but especially after tenure.

At this point in the argument the Malhotra group typically shifts its tactics and says, look, these books really are of low quality. They use a postmodern argument up to a point, disdaining usual academic standards—and then they buy into those standards after all, alleging that the books have been wrongly evaluated and are bad books. Their arguments against the books' quality are inadequate: any good scholar makes some mistakes, so a good critique has to do much more than list some problems (even if all the items on the list of alleged errors were really errors). But to the extent that Malhotra, Rao, and others engage in argument of the usual kind, they implicitly become part of the give-and-take of scholarly argument and evaluation. Their credentials, their knowledge of languages, and their own academic publications (should there be any) are all, then, on the line for evaluation. Selection of evaluators of a person's work typically follows evaluation of their own scholarly work. So let them really join the game, if they want to claim to be better evaluators than those conventional scholars who have already repeatedly evaluated these authors' work, whether in book reviews or in the processes of hiring and promotion. It would be a welcome development to see Malhotra and his group drop the postmodern line and engage in normal scholarly argument, with the vulnerabilities it entails, putting their own scholarly publications in the scales (which means first producing some). To the extent that they take this course, however, they need to drop the campaign of intimidation and hostility, admitting that the usual standards of the academy, and not the threatening actions of the Hindu Students Council, will determine who gets jobs and what gets taught.

Malhotra represents himself as seeking to restore Hinduism to a place of respect from which it has been dislodged by the activities of Doniger and other U.S. scholars. In reality, however, things are almost exactly the reverse. The activities of Malhotra, by linking Hindu Americans (in whose name he claims to speak) to strident, inaccurate, smear tactics and, indirectly, to threats against scholars' very lives, lower the prestige of Hindu Americans in the U.S. academy and in U.S. culture more generally. They make Hindu Americans look like an ethnic minority that does not understand norms of civil discourse and academic freedom, and that tries to get its way by falsehood and violence. That is hardly a good image for a minority. Such activities, moreover, subvert the study of Hinduism by discouraging younger scholars from entering the field. Hindu Americans should be deeply outraged by Malhotra's claim to speak on their behalf. It would be good if many more people in the diaspora community would read the books in question, form their own opinions, and enter into a real dialogue with the scholars who wrote them, one characterized by curiosity, respect for evidence, and, above all, civility.

Meanwhile, the academy must, as Courtright says, "stand firm in its resolve to defend free inquiry . . . In this age of identity politics and political correctness, the academy is vulnerable to bending over backwards to not offend . . . When offers for dialogue are met with harangues, then the academy needs to close its door until such time as religious communities are willing to honor free inquiry rather than insist on their own authority to censor."[93]

Holding On to the Truth Claim

The war over history pits one narrative against another. In a sense one might say that it pits a Nehruvian narrative of India's past, which stresses plurality, complexity, and tension, against a Hindutva narrative, which stresses internal purity and external danger. The narratives of Thapar and of many critics of the Hindu right do emphasize Nehruvian themes: the heterogeneity of India's traditions; an idea of national unity that does not efface the coexistence of different religions, ethnicities, and regional cultures; the possibility of coexistence and cooperation between Hindus and Muslims; the idea that animosities are themselves heterogeneously motivated, with some being driven by religious issues, but others by personal resentment or economic gain; that people are themselves complex and their motives often mixed and impure.

It might be tempting, at this point, to draw a postmodern conclusion. All narratives are political: they have their version of history, we have ours, and let's just try to make sure that ours prevails because we like ours and we want our side to win. This conclusion, however,

would not capture what is wrong with the Hindu right's historical narrative. First, on the normative ethical plane, we should not concede that the ethical values promoted by the Hindutva narrative are normatively equivalent to the values implicit in the Nehruvian account, and that "we" like the latter only because they are "ours." We should insist that there are good reasons to be given in favor of a political conception that stresses the values of equal worth, respect for diversity, and interreligious amity over those of romantic homogeneity, the subordination of minorities, and the eternal badness of external evil. Whatever account we give of ethical argument and ethical objectivity—although this is not the place to unravel those disputed notions—we should recognize that a constraint on any adequate such account is that it be able to tell us that respect is better than murder, and not just because more people favor respect—for, often enough, they don't. As the philosopher Bernard Williams memorably observed to a gay scholar-activist who was discussing Foucault's ideas, "If truth is nothing but power, you will always lose."[94]

But historical truth is our topic, and we can make an even more forceful point about that. What is wrong with the Hindutva view of history is that, at many points at least, it neglects or distorts the evidence. We needn't take up the cudgels for an old-fashioned positivism about history in order to insist on the virtues that Thapar rightly emphasizes: inclusiveness, methodological consistency, marshaling of evidence, analytical precision. We need not deny that the choice of how to construct a narrative out of the data always reflects some conception of what is worth talking about, and that such conceptions are often influenced by one's culture and politics. Still, the narrative must square itself with the data—textual, documentary, archaeological—and if there are parts that won't square, one must be truthful about them. If the data include (as Thapar's data do) textual sources, the historian must investigate those sources in their historical context, seeing how they might themselves have fallen short of these key historical virtues. These standards are the key to any adequate account of why some histories of India are valuable and others mere hackwork. A history that meets them will never be the final word, because the past is too many-sided and too elusive for any account to be final. But it will be respectable. On the whole, and with certain exceptions (such as the critique of the Aryan invasion hypothesis), Hindutva history is not respectable.

This work is not respectable not only because it gets particular facts wrong. What it gets wrong is the entire shape of India's history. Distinguished historians uncover the tensions and conflicts internal to each culture, including their own, not because that is their ideology but because cultures are in fact scenes of conflict and debate. Neglecting those internal tensions distorts history, and blocks the self-criticism that is one of history's great gifts to the present. Distinguished historians also uncover the complexity of the motives of individual historical actors, rather than painting history as a Manichean contest between pure good and unmitigated evil—not because that is their religious or political ideology, but because human beings are in fact complex and divided beings, moved at times by love and compassion, but also struggling with anxiety, anger, and the urge to dominate.

As historian Tanika Sarkar says in this chapter's epigraph, it has been a favorite trope of the Hindu right to hijack postmodernist doctrines for its own ends, saying that all narratives are just expressions of interest and/or power, and that its narrative is just as good as the ones it contradicts—better, if it prevails in the political arena. Similarly, historian Mushirul Hasan worries about the way in which the BJP's rewriting of history, in the context of the postmodern abandonment of the notion of historical objectivity, "entails the dissolution of history and necessarily jeopardizes historical study as normally understood."[95] Against this, historians like Thapar, Hasan, and Sarkar know, it is not enough to assert a different view in a loud voice. One must say something qualitatively different, something from which the notion of truth is ineliminable: you can't unmake the past at your pleasure. However we theorize the notion of historical truth—a long and a disputed matter[96]—we need this notion to live and make sense of our lives, and in a form to which the ideas of factual accuracy, comprehensiveness, and precision are integral. This is true and that isn't. This, and not that, "indubitably happened."

8 THE EDUCATION WARS

> The object of education is the freedom of mind which can only be achieved through the path of freedom—though freedom has its risk and responsibility as life itself has.
>
> RABINDRANATH TAGORE, *"My School"*

Education and Ideology

Nothing is more crucial to democracy than education. Through primary and secondary education, young citizens form, at a crucial age, habits of mind that will be with them all through their lives. They learn to ask questions or not to ask them; to take what they hear at face value or to probe more deeply; to imagine the situation of a person different from themselves or to see such a person as a looming threat to their own projects; to think of themselves as members of a homogeneous group or as citizens of a nation, and a world, made up of many different people and groups, all of whom deserve respect and understanding. It is therefore not surprising that education plays a large part in India's recent political struggle.

The minds of the young have always been the focus of the Hindu right, ever since Hedgewar recommended that the RSS focus on boys rather than adults. For many years the RSS reached the young through *shakhas* alone, relying on the tedium of public education to give their entertaining agenda a toehold. With the BJP's ascendance to governmental power came unprecedented opportunities of access to young minds through public instruction. Under the leadership of Education Minister Murli Manohar Joshi, a BJP politician with close links to the

RSS and VHP, the government launched an aggressive campaign to "saffronize" education, meaning to infuse into it the ideology of Hindutva. A central battle in this campaign was a struggle over national textbooks issued by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT), particularly in history and social science.

This battle has intrinsic interest and importance. At the same time, however, it takes place on a very narrow terrain. Debates about textbooks, valuable though they are, have distracted attention from deeper flaws in India's system (or systems, in the various states) of public education: corruption, lack of effective teaching, books that are dull and pedagogically inept, and, above all, an excessive emphasis on rote learning and "teaching to the test." Education for the rural poor provided by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) is often pedagogically inventive and insightful, preserving Tagore's insight that the essential task of education is to strengthen natural curiosity through critical thinking and the cultivation of the imagination. Elite education in private schools often has at least some of these virtues. Meanwhile, however, in most state-run schools, science and technology prosper (at least when the teacher shows up and teaches) while essential values of critical thinking and mental freedom, so crucial to the health of a democracy, are sorely neglected.

Textbooks, New and Old

The textbook wars take place within a complex formal structure. NCERT, charged with developing curricula and textbooks for schools that opt to use them, is technically a private body; it successfully argued its nongovernmental status in a Supreme Court case in 1991.[1] Nonetheless it has very close links to the Ministry of Education, and its head appears to be chosen by that ministry. By now, in a controversial Supreme Court decision, it has been defined back into the government and given virtually unrestricted authority.[2]

Another body, however, was traditionally the official state agency for deliberation about education policy: the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which includes representatives of the states and which has existed at least since 1935. The states have consistently sup-

ported CABE and have sought to make its authority permanent.[3] But it is not a statutory body, and the resolutions constituting it in 1986 and 1990 do not say that consultation with it is required. After 1994 it was not reconstituted.[4] There are widely varying views about its proper role and indeed about whether it still exists.

In 2000 NCERT proposed a new curricular framework called the National Curriculum Framework of School Education (NCFSE), which consisted of a document describing the curriculum and a series of textbooks. The framing document itself was controversial, containing references to the importance of religious values in education and insisting that students would be evaluated, ranked, and tracked by their "spiritual quotient," or "S.Q.," as well as by their I.Q.

Because the new books were not ready when the framework document was issued, orders went out from the Ministry of Education, specifically from its Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), in October 2001 to delete and not teach numerous passages from the old textbooks. It is widely believed that the CBSE was under pressure from NCERT to take this stand.[5] Professor J. S. Rajput, then head of NCERT, says that the CBSE issued its circular on the basis of "a suggestion made by us that certain 'objectionable' portions from history textbooks be deleted."[6] Some of the stricken passages had to do with beef-eating and cow sacrifice. One passage told students that archaeological evidence was more important than religious texts as evidence for the dating of material artifacts. One long passage concerned the origins of Jainism as a reaction against Hindus' killing of animals. One concerned the opposition of Brahmins to Ashoka's Buddhist policy of limiting animal sacrifice. Another long passage concerned the origins and the eventual rigidity of the caste system. One concerned the origins of Sikhism as an egalitarian religious movement for regional independence.[7] The authors of the books in question were not consulted before their work was mutilated. Thapar recalls: "I came to know about the circular from media reports. The CBSE or NCERT did not inform me. If there is anything objectionable in a book, you have to take the author's permission to make changes. In the past, too, when state education agencies wished to make changes, the agreement was that the author had to be informed before making any changes and he had to agree with the changes. None of that happened this time."[8]

She points out that the books had been used for nearly thirty-five years without complaint.

Meanwhile new books were published in 2002 and 2003.[9] The books themselves immediately became the target of intense scrutiny as scholars and journalists decried inaccuracies, pilloried inadequate English style, and, above all, drew attention to the Hindutva perspective that had been used in composing the books' account of history. A systematic account of the errors in the new history books was produced by the Indian History Congress, and several collections of articles and editorials were published by the NGO Sahmat, dedicated to opposing religious animosity and violence.[10] The NCERT group replied with a defense of the books most often attacked and with a broadside against the old NCERT textbooks.[11]

The first thing that can be said unequivocally about the new books is that they were a rush job. The paper is cheap; often the print is so faint as to be barely legible; margins are uneven, with the text sometimes tailing off the page; illustrations are sporadic and of low quality. Nor were the books vetted for even the grossest and most basic errors. There are many comic moments, such as repeated reference to the ancient Jews as "Israelis";[12] reference to a religion called "Zudaism";[13] and discussion of a legal writ called "Hebeas Corpus" and of "the great philosopher Schoperhour."[14]

English style is horrendous more or less throughout the series, the book by Meenakshi Jain being a small oasis of literacy. "The duties of a true Jew is to pray daily and say grace before and after meals," we learn in a sentence that shows not even a basic knowledge of English grammar (quite apart from its grotesque account of Judaism, since no other duties are mentioned).[15] As for Jesus, "He emphasized on one God and gave supreme importance to love, brotherhood and compassion. He performed various miracles such as raising the dead, casting out devils, healing the sick, calming the winds and waves, etc."[16] So much for Christianity. The coverage of Buddhism is similarly brief, vague, and illiterate: "within five hundred years Buddha spread far and wide in different parts of the world."[17] Historian Sumit Sarkar has catalogued the howlers in the class (or grade) IX social science textbook, which include sentences such as "The Mughal empire did exist but only in name having no power and no teeth left with it."[18] Lists of this sort cir-

culated throughout 2003, to the delight of some and the embarrassment of others.

The incompetence shown in the style of the books was matched by incompetence in accuracy. Maps were full of mistakes.[19] Factual howlers were so numerous that no reliance could be placed on any statement, at least in the worst of the books, such as the class IX social science text or Makkan Lal's *Ancient India*. Even when there was an attempt to be up-to-date, the result was usually garbled or, worse, false. Even sympathizers with the Hindu right joined the chorus of criticism: Vishal Agarwal, for example, wrote: "I was simply appalled to read all but one of them [Jain's book]. The textbooks by Hari Om, etc., were not only written in atrocious English, they were full of factual errors and were replete with one-sided narratives."[20]

Perhaps scholars always look for the treatment of their own work, and I am happy to add to the list of howlers the grave misrepresentations of my own. I was initially delighted to discover that the class X social science book, *Contemporary India*, had a chapter on the Human Development approach, as an alternative to approaches to development that focus on economic growth alone. India has been particularly energetic in implementing this approach through its branch of the United Nations Development Programme. Moreover, since the approach was initiated by Amartya Sen, an Indian citizen who was India's third winner of the Nobel Prize in 1998, it was not surprising that this approach would be mentioned in a schoolbook for Indian children. So it was highly disconcerting to find three large factual errors in the brief account of it. One is the claim that although human development and not economic development is the ultimate goal, "The importance of economic growth among all contributory factors of development is paramount."[21] Sen, however, in fact argues through careful empirical studies that economic growth contributes little or nothing to the improvement of education and health care, two of the main goals of the Human Development approach; he recommends that each separate goal be given a separate analysis to see what in fact does promote it.[22] The BJP's support for figures such as Andhra Pradesh's Chandrababu Naidu, who promoted a "shining" state through foreign investment while doing nothing about the condition of the rural poor, speaks through this sentence, a nearly slanderous deformation of what Sen and I actually argue. Second, the textbook asserts that the approach analyzes development "in context of an average individual"[23]—whereas the approach, as practiced, insists on disaggregating the population into discrete segments and focusing particular attention on people and groups that might be thought to enjoy an especially low quality of life, such as women and the rural poor. (Once again, the ideology of "India Shining" shows its colors: promote a glorious average, and there is no need to think about those at the bottom.) Third and worst, the whole discussion is introduced by the claim "In social development, whatever benefit an individual derives is only as a collective being."[24] This is an idea that Sen and I emphatically reject, insisting that ***each and every individual person*** is an end, and that it is ethically wrong to present development in terms of the well-being of collectivities. This error, too, seems more ideology than mistake, since it expresses the communitarian ethos of the Hindu right, as against the idea of individual rights.

These errors already look highly ideological, an attempt to make the influential Human Development approach look as if it supports BJP economic policies. Many other questionable statements in the books are even more flagrantly political. *Ancient India* toes the orthodox RSS line: early Hindu India was a wonderful place, with no big problems. The introductory chapter ends with a long quotation from British historian A. L. Basham's book *The Wonder That Was India:* "in no other part of the ancient world were the relations of man and man, and of man and the state, so fair and humane . . . No other ancient lawgiver proclaimed such noble ideals of fair play in battle as did Manu. In all her history of warfare Hindu India has few tales to tell of cities put to the sword or of the massacre of noncombatants. To us the most striking feature of ancient Indian civilization is its humanity."[25] Basham's English is better than Lal's, but, as many historians have noted, his effusive account of early India omits issues of caste and class oppression, the misery of the poor, and, very conspicuously, the situation of women. The laws of Manu are in fact infamous for their extremely harsh and restrictive treatment of women, who are not permitted to do anything independently, even in their own homes, and who are seen as essentially intemperate and immoral, in constant need of male control.[26] The rest of the book follows the Basham approach, expressing uncritical wonder at India, mentioning none of its problems. Meenakshi Jain's treatment of the medieval period is similarly ideological, although its greater intelligence and subtlety put it at least in

the arena of academic respectability. Jain's book omits any mention of the *dalits* and their situation or of important women's issues, such as Akbar's harsh disapproval of *sati* and his prohibition of child marriage, an entrenched Hindu custom by that time.[27]

One could, and scholars did, go on and on chronicling such examples of political distortion; but perhaps two more examples will suffice. *Contemporary India,* the social science textbook for class X (the same one that distorted the Human Development approach), states that an activity can be called "terrorist" only if it aims "to overthrow an elected government."[28] Thus the use of violence by the Hindu right during the BJP government would not count as terrorism; nor would the use of violence by agents of the state itself. Probably not even the illegal acts at Ayodhya in 1992 would count, since they were not aimed at the "overthrow" of the Congress government, only at electing one more sympathetic to their goals. (Indeed, most of the world's terrorist violence, including the 9/11 attacks, would not count.) In an earlier chapter the book discusses the dangers of religious communalism for Indian society, saying: "Communalism accompanied by terrorism and separatism poses danger to our national unity and integration."[29] So, not communalism (sectarian violence) by itself, but only communalism accompanied by "separatism"—the charge typically leveled against Muslims—and "terrorism," as they have narrowly defined it. The text gives the superficial appearance of condemning all religious violence, while shading things so as to exempt the violence perpetrated by the right. In its diagnosis of where this danger comes from, the textbook states: "Fundamentalists project their religious community distinct and separate from the rest of the religions . . . By this way of maintaining their separate identity they distance others from self and self from others. In a sense, it attracts disintegration of the society."[30] This is pure Savarkar (although he wrote better English): the dangerous, disintegrative thing is to have a religious community that keeps apart from the homogeneous nation, that recognizes a holy land that is not identical with the motherland. Christians and Muslims are implicitly portrayed as dangerous.

The authors of three of the attacked books replied in a small NCERT-published monograph, which goes through the list of errors alleged in the Indian History Congress report and responds point by point.[31] Makkan Lal and Hari Om do not seem to have made any headway against the critics of their shoddy work. Meenakshi Jain, as one might expect, performs with integrity and intelligence. Often she grants the critics' point, saying "inadvertent error," "inadvertent spelling error," "suggestion valid," or "a more detailed description . . . can certainly be added." Once she even says, "very acute observation."[32] At times, when there is more than one point made in a given paragraph, she responds to the smaller one and lets the large one go unanswered. When she does respond, her typical strategy is to produce a (recent) secondary source that says what she says. On the one hand, this is not exactly what will satisfy the critics, since they are talking about what is true, not about what some possibly substandard piece of secondary literature has claimed. On the other hand, since Jain is not a professional historian of medieval India and was under pressure to produce a book on this topic very quickly, it is understandable that she had to rely on secondary sources, and, to the extent that she produces them, she salvages respectability if not factual accuracy. And sometimes she makes some good points against the critics, reminding them of the focus of her discussion at a given point, and why bringing in the details they suggest would be distracting. The response does not make her book impressive, and it surely does not answer large points about emphasis and omission. It does, however, show a spirit of concern with truth that one would like to see more often from this group of people.

A commercially published set of alternative textbooks was produced during the heyday of the new NCERT books by a group led by the eminent left-wing historian Irfan Habib, under the series title A People's History of India.[33] Although textbooks cannot substitute for primary sources, the student reader is given credit for intelligence and for a rudimentary interest in scholarship. The series, written in clear English, contains discussions of problems about evidence that show respect for the student's capacity for analysis.

For example, Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur carefully explain why the Vedas might be considered good historical sources, describing the mechanisms of oral transmission in a priestly tradition that valued faithfulness. They also lay out the reasons for thinking that the texts were transmitted orally for many hundreds of years before they were written down, and for thinking that the original forms of the various hymns differ widely in date. Ample extracts from the primary texts, well chosen for their literary vividness, are included and well translated. Even

though the books have few illustrations (presumably because of economic factors), they are written in an engaging way, so that students will want to read more.

Habib and Thakur go on to describe how one might use textual evidence to reconstruct daily life of the period: arts and crafts, the economy, the structure of society. Along the way they introduce the student to the rudiments of linguistic reconstruction and the distinction between loan words in a language and the structure of the language itself.

There are, of course, shortcomings in the series as it goes on. The section "Language Change before 1500 B.C." in *The Indus Civilization* is well done in general, although Habib emphasizes resemblances among isolated words rather than structural, morphological connections among languages, a common mistake among nonlinguists. Nonetheless, the accompanying note gives an amazingly detailed account of the different families of Indo-European languages, introducing students to evidence from Tocharian, Old Irish, and other ancient languages. Occasionally there is some tendentiousness; for example, continuing controversies about remains of the horse in the Indus Valley civilization are taken as settled (in the negative), and other ongoing disputes are not addressed. There is little that is distinctly ideological, apart from the kinds of questions asked—legitimate questions, but not the only ones. Habib, an avowedly Marxist historian, insistently focuses on the way ordinary people lived, so far as that can be known. But one would also learn a great deal more about the heroes and the gods from Habib than from Makkan Lal. Within the economic limits imposed, the series has flair and creativity. It is not the only way textbooks on this period might be written, but their distinction, complexity, and insight provide a welcome contrast to the dreary ineptitude of the (new) NCERT books. Pedagogically, too, they may be superior to the old NCERT textbooks, which, by all accounts, were heavy and uninviting.

The Court Defends Values Education

As controversy over the new textbooks raged, a group of activists in 2002 approached the Supreme Court by petition, challenging the constitutionality of the NCFSE.[34] Two legal issues were raised. First, it was alleged that the treatment of religion in the curriculum was in violation of Article 28 of the Constitution, which states that "no religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds." The petitioners drew attention not only to the ideological content of the series as a whole but also to some specific doctrinal claims, such as the claim, in the introduction to the series, that "students have to be given the awareness that the essence of every religion is common, only the practices differ."[35] This assertion seems innocuous enough, but of course it could not be accepted in that simple a form by any believing Muslim, Jew, or Christian. Whether it ought to be accepted by believing Hindus is also a very contentious matter. It is an idea that fits right in with the Hindutva strategy to homogenize all groups under the banner of the Hindu nation.

An ancillary point was made about the curriculum's stated intention of ranking and sorting students not only by their I.Q. but also by their "spiritual quotient." It was alleged that S.Q. is a measure unknown anywhere else in the world, and thus a purely arbitrary imposition, in violation of Article 14, the Constitution's guarantee of equality before the law and the equal protection of the laws.

The second constitutional issue concerned federalism. The Constitution makes education a state, not a national, responsibility. But the new curriculum was framed without convening CABE, and thus without consulting the states.

Supreme Court cases are heard by three-judge panels, so the luck of the assignment can make an enormous difference to the outcome. In this case, a unanimous three-judge panel rejected the religious instruction argument. Two of the three justices also rejected the CABE argument; the third, Justice Sema, in an opinion concurring in part, dissenting in part, stated that in his view nonconsultation with CABE was "not proper," and that federal consultation was "highly essential . . . in evolving a national consensus pertaining to national policy on education which require [*sic*] implementation in all the States."

Justice Manharlal Bhikalal Shah's majority opinion is one of the weakest pieces of legal argumentation that has recently emerged from the Supreme Court of India. Its constitutional reasoning, its general sense of the issues involved, and its very use of the English language are all a discredit to the Court. The argument concerning CABE is at least clear and straightforward: CABE is not a statutory body, and there is

nothing in the constituting government resolution that requires consultation. Its function was merely advisory. This argument does not address the larger constitutional issue of federalism; perhaps, however, it responds to the petitioners' specific complaint.

The troubling part of the opinion is its response to the Article 28 issue. Admittedly it is a delicate matter to distinguish between instruction about religion and religious instruction. This distinction has been much discussed both in the United States and in India, but its parameters remain insufficiently clear. In a concurring opinion, Justice D. M. Dharmadhikari quoted from the debate in the original Constituent Assembly when Article 28 was being considered, to show that Ambedkar clearly did not intend the article to prohibit instruction about religion. Ambedkar said: "My own view is this, that religious instruction is to be distinguished from research or study. Those are quite different things. Religious instruction means this. For instance, so far as the Islam religion is concerned, it means that you believe in one God, that you believe that Pagambar the Prophet is the last Prophet and so on, in other words, what we call 'dogma.' A dogma is quite different from study."[36] However, Justice Dharmadikari did nothing to apply this distinction to the case before him.

Justice Shah simply waved the whole issue away. Values are at risk in an era of globalization and modernization; religion is our major source of values; so, religion has to be taught:

> None can . . . dispute that [the] past five decades have witnessed constant erosion of the essential social, moral and spiritual values and increase in cynicism at all levels. We are heading for a materialistic society disregarding the entire value based social system. None can also dispute that in secular society, moral values are of utmost importance . . . for controlling wild animal instinct in human beings and for having civilized cultural society, it appears that religions have come into existence. Religion is the foundation for value base survival of human beings in a civilized society . . . Value based education is likely to help the nation to fight against all kinds of prevailing fanaticism, ill-will, violence, dishonesty, corruption, exploitation and drug abuses.

What is most disturbing in this odd paragraph is the unremarked slide from ethical values to religious values. Making this distinction is hardly a new judicial issue: any nation with a constitutional ban on religious establishment, and any nation that, like India, seeks to deny preeminence to a single religion, has to wrestle with it. Nobody thinks that education in public schools ought to be value free. Justice Shah is attacking a straw man. In both India and the United States there is agreement that values that underlie the Constitution itself, such as respect for others, the equality of human beings, and human dignity, can and should be taught to all. The task before the Court is to define the point at which such ethical teaching becomes objectionably sectarian. When it becomes sectarian, an equality issue is immediately raised: for the religion whose ideas are presented will be presented as the official religion, and other religions (or nonreligious views) automatically take on second-class status. There is a huge difference between value-based ethical education and religious education. No matter what the NCFSE says, religious education always involves dogmas that may be objectionable to other religions—including the dogma that all the religions have a common core.

Justice Shah was not simply talking about the teaching of the history of religions. What he recommended was teaching specific norms as good norms. (He mentioned the Hindu idea of ***dharma*** as one key example.) How could mere "education about religions" counter the list of modern ills that he recognized? Clearly, religion could counter such ills only by being presented as something students ***ought*** to believe. It would be acceptable to recommend values if the values in question were the basic ethical values underlying the democracy and its Constitution. It is not acceptable, in India's pluralistic democracy, to recommend religious values of any kind, however apparently vague or innocuous.[37] At the end of his opinion, Justice Shah alluded to the petitioners' contention that instruction about religion had spilled over into "teaching religious tenets," but he dismissed the point as "hypothetical, premature, and without any basis." He then dismissed the issue about "spiritual quotient" equally casually: it was up to education experts to set their own criteria for ranking students.

The whole opinion is disquieting, perhaps a sign of degenerating legal skills on the Court, perhaps also a more disturbing sign of growing politicization. Justice Shah, appointed to the Supreme Court in 1998 at the age of sixty, spent most of his career in Gujarat and was a judge of the Gujarat High Court (whose record of politicized judgments we

have noted earlier). He retired from the Supreme Court in 2003.[38] The author of the concurring opinion, Justice Dharmadikari, was also elevated to the Supreme Court from the Gujarat High Court, also during the ascendancy of the BJP government. (Justice Sema, author of the partially dissenting opinion, is from Jammu and Kashmir.) The fact that the justices choose their own colleagues makes overt politicization of the process difficult; creeping politicization, however, is all too likely in a system in which judicial nominees receive no public scrutiny.

Fortunately, the election removed the necessity to rely on the courts for textbook reform. The Congress government has withdrawn the new NCERT textbooks and appointed scholars to deliberate about a new agenda. The people selected are of high quality: educational theorist Krishna Kumar now heads NCERT; and political scientist Zoya Hasan, a leading scholar of Indian politics and women's issues (former head of the Centre for Political Science at Jawaharlal Nehru University), heads a committee working on standards for textbooks to be used in private education and by the states. It appears that, at least temporarily, the old NCERT textbooks will be reinstated, while more uniform standards will be set for books used outside the NCERT orbit.

State Textbooks: Hitler as Hero

Education is a state subject, and a large proportion of India's children are educated from state-sponsored textbooks, not by the national ones proposed by NCERT (although states have the option of choosing those). Many states sponsor their own books, which are likely to be written in vernacular languages and thus more broadly accessible to students than English-language texts (although some state texts are issued in both English and vernacular versions). The struggle over the NCERT textbooks, then, is hardly the end of the story of the deformation of history as taught to the young. Gujarat has had a long history of sectarianism in education; its current state-level textbooks are no exception. Books in history and social science contain, in the first place, factual errors and inadequate data: the data for agricultural productivity in the 2004 book, for example, are from 1983, although many other aspects of the book have been brought up to date. The English

style is even worse, on the whole, than that of the NCERT books: "Thus, man formed the society to conquer the best peaks of action and thinking"; "When people used to meet earlier, they wished each other saying Ram Ram and by shaking hands. Today, people enjoy their meeting by speaking Namaste. Is it not a change?" Globalization is defined as "the bonding of the whole world with a single thread, thus becoming one unit of the entire world or the coming together of all the countries of the world."[39]

Far worse, however, is the ideological portrayal of modern history. The class X social studies textbook for 2004 has chapters on "Hitler, the Supremo," and "Internal Achievements of Nazism." In fact the *Times of India*, among the most conservative of India's major newspapers, states that "the class X book presents a frighteningly uncritical picture of Fascism and Nazism. The strong national pride that both these phenomena generated, the efficiency in the bureaucracy and the administration and other 'achievements' are detailed, but pogroms against Jews and atrocities against trade unionists, migrant labourers, and any section of people who did not fit into Mussolini or Hitler's definition of rightful citizen don't find any mention." The Holocaust is mentioned in a single sentence, and none too accurately: it is alleged that all 6 million Jews who were killed were killed in gas chambers.[40]

Despite the international publicity that greeted these examples, and despite related protests from parents, social activists, and educationists, the books were reissued in 2005, in a form called "updated," but with no significant change in the treatment of Hitler. The class IX social studies textbook released on March 14, 2005, makes no mention of the Holocaust when discussing Nazism, and instead glorifies Hitler, saying: "Hitler adopted aggressive policy and led the Germans towards ardent nationalism." Nazism is defined as "coordination of nationalism and socialism," something that would seem very attractive to young Indian children, brought up on their Constitution's declaration that India is a "socialist" nation.[41] In the class X textbook, the chapter "Internal Achievements of Nazism" contains the sentence "Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time, establishing a strong administrative set-up."[42] Jesuit priest and social activist Cedric Prakash says that the books contain more than 300 factual errors. Having been centrally involved in the protests against the

books in 2004, he now says that nothing was done in response to complaints from parents and scholars. He intends to take the matter to court. A senior official from the state's education department, asked to respond to the charges, told the BBC that "anomalies arose when the book was translated from Gujarati into English."[43]

Here we confront one of the most difficult aspects of the textbook controversy: the difficulty of any responsible oversight in the decentralized federal system. The problem arises from a combination of decentralization at the federal level and top-down authority inside each state; if Modi were not able to impose his own ideology through mandatory textbooks to be used by all children, this particular problem would not have arisen, although many Gujarati teachers might well transmit a similar message on their own. It is hard to say what would improve this situation. National orthodoxy is problematic, but local teacher autonomy has its own risks, especially when teachers are corrupt and often fail to teach. At least the spotlight of national and world publicity has the potential to generate discussion and produce greater accountability. If middle-class parents believe that their children are being taught a version of history that will hobble them through life, they may become more willing to join the protest movement, and this movement may eventually bear fruit. Meanwhile the schools of Gujarat remain a breeding ground for hate.

Daily Reality: Absenteeism, "Private Tuition"

The debate about textbooks gives the new government a task in which success is relatively easy: expose the flaws in the BJP textbooks, put better people in charge, and either reinstate the old books, or revise them, or commission new books. All these things are eminently doable, and some have already been done.

Meanwhile, however, public education is in a disastrous condition in many, if not most, states. The most careful and comprehensive study is a report prepared by Amartya Sen's Pratichi Trust (a fund set up with his Nobel Prize money), based on a close study of parts of West Bengal.[44] The report notes at the outset that West Bengal is not doing unusually badly. Indeed, with its policy of land reform and its strong

support for rural *panchayats,* it has long been dedicated to opening up opportunities for the poor. This emphasis applies in the domain of education, too: the government has greatly raised teacher salaries from their former low level; and recently it has created a new network of education centers for rural children, the Sishu Siksha Kendras, or SSKs.

The good news in West Bengal is that parents are by and large convinced of the importance of education and have relatively high aspirations for their children. Ninety-six percent of parents said that boys should acquire primary education; 82 percent said the same of girls.[45] Parents support education not only for job prospects but also for reasons of self-esteem, independence, and social status.[46] Unfortunately, goals are different for boys and for girls. For girls, parents say that the main purpose of education is marriageability. At least they do think that education matters for a good marriage, and that attitude marks progress. Most add that an educated girl could run a household more efficiently, since she could keep accounts, and so forth. She will also gain respect in her husband's and in-laws' eyes and will help to educate her children.[47] Nonetheless, the level of education that is thought important for marriage is lower than the level sought for sons,[48] and girls are withdrawn earlier, to attend to household chores or to do other work.

Parents attach importance to education. But they are highly dissatisfied with the education their children are receiving. Only 41 percent of parents reported satisfaction with the work of teachers in primary schools.[49] There are good reasons for this dissatisfaction, because the overall picture is depressing.

First of all, the schools are underfunded and often lack the most basic facilities. Buildings are small; many have only a single classroom, and only one school studied had four or more classrooms. The presence of different levels in a single room was frequently mentioned as a reason for dissatisfaction. Of the eighteen primary schools studied, thirteen had no playground, fifteen had no musical instrument, sixteen had no toilet facilities, nine had no toys or games, and four had no blackboard.[50] The dearth of resources imposes a considerable financial burden on parents, who have to supply their children with paper, exercise books, uniforms, pencils, and books. A child from Kultanr village in Puruliya (or his parents) found an ingenious solution to the paper shortage: he did his schoolwork on sample ballot papers distributed

in the village during state elections in 2001.[51] Children often spend 300–500 rupees per year on these supplies, a very considerable expense in a state in which a manual laborer may earn as little as 5–10 rupees per day.[52]

The teacher-student ratio is shocking: an average of 50:1.[53] This is not a good ratio even at the university level, but in primary school it is disastrous. The average number of teachers per school is 2.55 in the districts studied, below the West Bengal average of 3.3. Most primary schools are run by two teachers, though all have four grades to instruct, and some have more.

Not surprisingly, given these impediments, absenteeism is very high among both pupils and teachers. On the day of the visit by the researchers, only 51 percent of the registered students were found to be present in the school.[54] Twenty percent of the regular public school teachers were absent, and 14 percent of the SSK teachers were absent. Many teachers are dedicated, but there are also many who are too burned-out or indifferent or corrupt to make an effort. The teachers' unions, which have pressed effectively for reasonable teacher salaries, have not yet taken a strong stand against these abuses.[55]

Even when both teachers and students show up, there are severe impediments to learning, beyond those created by the lack of suitable facilities. One of the gravest problems the *Pratichi Report* uncovered is a widespread practice of "private tuition": parents pay teachers to come to their home after school and tutor their child. This practice creates financial incentives for teachers not to teach, or not to teach the full curriculum, during school hours, so that they will have a lucrative sideline in tutoring. Asked what was taught on the previous day, 31 percent of the children surveyed said that no teaching had taken place. Only 7 percent of children from classes III and IV who did not hire private tutors could even write their names correctly; among those who did hire private tutors, the rate was 80 percent.[56] When asked: "According to you, what are the main problems of primary schooling?" the head of a *panchayat* in the district of Puruliya answered immediately: "Teachers do not teach."[57]

Private tuition eviscerates the classroom experience and creates two levels of education, one for the relatively affluent and one for the poor.

Many poor parents, realizing its importance, make great sacrifices to come up with the necessary money. The fact that 45 percent of the children in the Pratichi survey paid for private tuition shows the extent of these sacrifices, since the districts studied were on the whole quite poor. So private tuition adds to the already great burden placed on poor families to buy school uniforms and equipment; together these expenses make a mockery of the constitutional guarantee of free public education and create large incentives for poor parents not to send their children to school—or to send only boys to school.

Private tuition cannot be ended by appealing to teacher idealism, given low salaries and the prevalence of burn-out and corruption. What is needed is strong leadership to stigmatize the practice and to take action against teachers who engage in it. Such leadership might come from the teachers' unions, but it has not. Nor has state government taken a strong position, perhaps out of deference to the unions, a serious problem in West Bengal. We badly need comparative field studies, both within India and comparing India to other nations, to see how some states and nations have avoided or combatted the problem of private tuition.

Despite the fact that education is largely managed by the states, national government could take a hand in combatting these problems. Funds from the center might help the states to address some of the shortcomings in equipment and infrastructure, and strong national leadership might begin to address the problems of absenteeism and private tuition. These problems, however, will be very difficult to eradicate, and the battle cannot be won quickly. It is therefore tempting for a national government that wants to present a good record of achievement in the next electoral campaign to let the states handle them as best they can, rather than staking the party's reputation on a risky and uncertain initiative. It is also tempting for state governments, desirous of presenting a good picture to the electorate, not to commit themselves too strongly to similar risky initiatives at the state level. While these problems remain unaddressed, however, the argument over textbooks is at best a tiny piece of the picture, at worst a distraction from more basic issues. For any democracy that wants to flourish, equalizing access to education is a challenge of the first importance.

The Disease of Rote Learning

Suppose teachers show up and teach the curriculum they are supposed to be teaching, in relatively decent facilities with students in regular attendance. Such a situation was evidently that of the Nagpur primary school attended by the boys in Lalit Vachani's film *The Boy in a Branch.* Nonetheless, that school seemed like a horrible place, where children were numbed by repetitive rote learning, imparted by a teacher who seemed utterly lacking in passion for her subject. The second large problem that is masked by the debate over textbooks is, then, the problem of pedagogy: both pedagogy in the classroom and the pedagogical aspect of textbooks and other classroom materials. The books, even when good, lead to an emphasis on cramming; the whole process focuses too little on critical thinking and active engagement.

Resource-poor education can still be creative and pedagogically rich. Repeatedly, in visiting NGOs that offer basic education for the poor, particularly in rural areas, I have seen this sort of education. One representative example is a program in rural Bihar (the Sithamarhi district) run by the Patna-centered NGO Adithi, created and run by the dynamic activist Viji Srinivasan, before her early death in 2005. Infrastructure in Bihar is so bad that it took two days, even in a jeep, to get to this district near the Nepalese border. When we arrived, we found facilities worse than any described in the *Pratichi Report.* Most teaching went on outside on the ground or in the shade of a barn (in which rats ran around, occasionally across our feet). I saw very little paper and only a few slates that were passed from hand to hand. Nonetheless, it was creative education. The literacy program for adult women, called "Reflect," began the day by asking the twenty or so women to draw (on a large sheet of rough wrapping paper) a map of the power structure of their village. We then discussed the map together, as the women identified points of intervention that might change the wages and hours currently offered them by the landlords for whom they work as sharecroppers. Everyone was animated; the prospect of criticizing entrenched structures of power had obviously led these women to attach great importance to the associated task of learning to read and write. At the end of the meeting we all joined in a song that is a staple of the

women's movement here. It began: "In every house there is fear. Let's do away with that fear. Let's build a women's organization." The song goes on to sing the virtues of education as an antidote to fear and oppression.

The literacy program for girls was housed in a shed next door. About fifteen girls of the village, ages six to fifteen, who worked as goatherds for most of the day, arrived at around four in the afternoon for three hours of learning. There were no desks, no chairs, no blackboard, and only a few slates and bits of chalk. Nonetheless, education was clearly progressing, through the resourcefulness and passion of the teachers, themselves poor rural women who have been assisted by Adithi's programs. The girls brought in the goats that they had been able to buy from the savings account they had jointly established in school, and part of the math instruction focused on such practical issues. After that the girls performed for us a play that they had recently put on for their village. It was about dowry, and the way this institution makes female lives seem to parents to be of lower value than male lives. Playing both male and female roles themselves, the girls told a story of how one young woman refused to be given in marriage with dowry. Her parents were shocked, and the father of the prospective groom became extremely angry. After much discussion, however, including a description of the way in which dowry is linked to the malnutrition and death of girls and the murders of adult women, the groom himself decided to refuse a dowry. He stood up proudly against his father—and the tall girl playing the groom stood up all the more proudly. Eventually even the two sets of parents agreed that the new way was better. The marriage took place, and no money changed hands. Teachers told us that the whole village turned out for the play, and they think that it did some good. Meanwhile the girls giggled with pleasure at the subversive entertainment they had cooked up.

There are many points of interest in this scene, which is replayed with small variations in many parts of rural India. Let me mention a few only: the close linkage between education and critical thinking about one's social environment; the emphasis on the arts as central aspects of the educational experience; the intense passion and investment of the teachers, their delight in the progress and also in the individuality of their students.

By contrast, in government schools, even when teachers show up and responsible teaching is done, teaching is primarily focused on rote learning; students are crammed with facts and routinized answers for the various examinations they are going to sit. Students report that this experience is quite deadening. It stimulates neither imagination nor critical thinking. Teachers are described as lacking in passionate involvement with the educational process. Students who have gone on to have some independence of mind often credit their achievement to a family that worked hard to keep the mind alive and growing.

Rote learning is an old problem in Indian education, as it is in most nations. The progressive education movements of the early twentieth century in Germany (Friedrich Froebel), England (A. S. Neill's Summerhill and Leonard Elmhirst's Dartington Hall), the United States (John Dewey), and India (Tagore) all had similar goals. In all these countries, the status quo ante was a deadening education that imposed learning from outside, with little attention to the growing mind of the child. What reformers sought was, above all, freedom of mind, the child's freedom to think critically, to imagine, and to explore the world with his or her own faculties, rather than being stuffed with facts imported from without. For all the leading reformers, the arts were crucial to the process of educating children.

For Tagore as for Dewey, the individual child was always the center of education. Children must be encouraged to aspire and to discipline themselves, but they would not do so if education treated them like automata. Most education, by contrast, is "a mere method of discipline which refuses to take into account the individual . . . a manufactory specially designed for grinding out uniform results."[58] Tagore himself suffered greatly in all the schools he attended—and, in each case, left as soon as possible.

Tagore expressed his views about rote learning in an allegory about traditional education called "The Parrot's Training." A certain rajah has a beautiful bird. He becomes convinced that his parrot needs to be educated. So he summons wise people from all over his empire. They argue endlessly about methodology and especially about textbooks. "Textbooks can never be too many for our purpose!" they say. The bird gets a beautiful school building: a golden cage. The learned teachers show the rajah the impressive method of instruction they have devised.

"The method was so stupendous that the bird looked absurdly unimportant in comparison." And so, "With text-book in one hand and baton in the other, the pundits [learned teachers] gave the poor bird what may fitly be called lessons!"[59]

One day the bird dies. Nobody notices for quite some time. The rajah's nephews come to report the fact:

> The nephews said, "Sire, the education of the bird is complete."
> "Does it hop?" the Raja enquired.
> "Never!" said the nephews.
> "Does it fly?"
> "No."
> "Bring me the bird," said the Raja.
> The bird was brought . . . The Raja poked the bird's body with his finger. Its inner stuffing of book-leaves rustled.
> Outside the window, a spring breeze murmured among the newly budded asoka leaves, and made the April morning wistful.[60]

The students at Tagore's school at Santiniketan had no such sad fate. Their entire education nourished the ability to think for oneself and to become a dynamic participant in cultural and political choice, rather than simply a follower of tradition. The arts were central to this enterprise. Like students in John Dewey's Laboratory School, Tagore's students learned by active "doing," and one of the most important forms of "doing" was participation in drama, music, poetry, and dance. Tagore, like Dewey, viewed the arts as crucial to the development of sympathy and imagination. But unlike Dewey, he was an artistic genius, who created original works in all these media. His dance-dramas were written for his students and were a pivotal part of their education.

During Tagore's lifetime, Santiniketan had a wide influence, attracting students from all over India and many from abroad. (Indira Nehru had her only happy school experiences here, despite the fact that she attended many elite and highly reputed schools, including the Badminton School in England.) After his death, it gradually lost its influence. Dewey was not a distinguished artist, but he was a clever entrepreneur, and he successfully marketed his conception of schooling far and wide, so that today there are few schools of any sort in the United States that

do not show traces of his influence, especially in primary education. Tagore was a great artist, and perhaps for that reason he made no attempt to export his educational concepts. His distrust of bureaucracy made him unwilling to delegate to others, even in Santiniketan itself, and so the school remained profoundly dependent on his personal participation. The use of Bengali as the primary language did not help broaden the appeal of the school, although during his lifetime it was not an obstacle to the enrollment of many students from elsewhere.

Today, sadly, Santiniketan is a shell of itself. The school still has a focus on the arts, but the dance performance that I observed there was hagiography of Tagore rather than a living embodiment of Tagore's spirit. The children danced in a routinized and lifeless way, performing the very work of Tagore's about the seasons of the year whose real spirit I heard vividly described by Amita Sen. Nor does the school currently attract students from all over India. Even in West Bengal, it is thought of as a school for problem children, rather than as a central example of excellence. One factor in the decline is surely the cultural vogue for science and engineering. Another, however, is the lack of creativity there. The associated university, Visva-Bharati, retains no curricular debt to Tagore's ideas of interdisciplinarity and learning about the entire world (antecedents of modern ideas of the "liberal arts education" at the university level). It is just a university like any other in India.

The very idea of a progressive education to which critical thinking and the arts are central is very much out of fashion in an India dominated by the goal of success in science and technology. The average middle-class parent dreams of sending a child to IIT, the Indian Institutes of Technology. Government education is reasonably successful in these areas, when things go well. What parents do not value, or demand, is the part of education that we associate with the humanities: critical thinking, imagination, knowledge of and participation in the arts. The same struggle is constantly being waged in all modern countries. In the United States the erosion of progressive reforms has not gone as far as it has in India, but it is definitely happening—in the cutting back of arts programs at all levels; in the increasing focus on science and technology, which is beginning to squeeze out humanities

and critical thinking; in the increasing neglect of internal growth of mind in favor of measurable results.

Naturally, if one is going to produce good educational results in a nation in which a large proportion of citizens cannot even read and write, national standards seem very important, and an emphasis on testing also seems important. But—as we in the United States are just beginning to find out with the No Child Left Behind Act—testing, even when egalitarian in its intention, often subverts true education as teachers increasingly teach to the test rather than thinking about how to awaken the mind of the child. If there is going to be an educational regime based on testing, great care must be taken to devise measurements that are qualitative and that reward insight and argument, and at the same time to counter the emphasis on testing with a strong focus on other educational values. Teachers and exam graders need to cooperate in fostering a regime that rewards independence of mind, imagination, and real thought. All too often, today, young Indian students are encouraged to produce exam essays that simply recapitulate, and these essays produce economic success.

That pedagogical values have been ignored can be seen from the textbook controversy itself, in which all the focus is on what version of Indian history should be stuffed into students, rather than on the training of independent minds. But history—to stick with the case that is most discussed in the textbook controversies—is taught well only if it is presented together with a pedagogy that fosters critical thinking, the use of multiple sources, and an understanding of the difficulty of constructing a historical narrative. Pedagogy is an important aspect of the construction of good textbooks, which can often help to guide teachers in their own pedagogy and to capture children's imaginations. These problems are not the focus of the current national debate.

In his illuminating book *Prejudice and Pride,* Krishna Kumar has argued that even the "good" history textbooks used by Indian children are much too neglectful of pedagogy and much too intent on fostering adherence to a single party line about history. He shows that this emphasis has its roots in colonial practice, the aim of which was to get Indians to swallow a particular derogatory narrative about their own place in history. Now, even if the aim is more benign, the mistrust of

the student's own powers of mind unfortunately lingers. Although the NCERT series had at its inception a progressive orientation, including admiration for rational thinking, the approach of the authors, Kumar argues, "provided little room for children to participate in historical analysis and judgment . . . Neither the authors nor the critics seemed much bothered about the strategies used in the texts for communicating with young readers."[61] The idea that a central aim of a good textbook should be to further the correct ideology is common, to some extent at least, to both the right and the left. To the extent that they endorse this aim, neither sufficiently respects the mind of the child.

Textbooks are a small part of the teaching of pluralistic citizenship. A good teacher can teach well even from a bad book, encouraging students to think critically about it. And even the finest textbook is dead unless enlivened by good teaching. But more thought can still be devoted to the pedagogical aspects of the books themselves. Vishal Agarwal (the American critic of Paul Courtright) makes a pertinent criticism of the old textbook regime. He praises the intellectual quality of some of the textbooks he used as a child in the 1980s, but deprecates both their pedagogical qualities and the stultifying quality of the accompanying pedagogy. The books, he says, were "very boring and written in a dense and stilted prose." Nor did they relate India's past to the students' present in a way that made history come alive.[62] Classroom teaching, focused on internalization, did not fill the gap. In an e-mail to me Agarwal recounted how his sister's little son in Virginia learned about the U.S. civil rights movement by participating in a play in which some children, playing the parts of African Americans, were forced to sit in the back seat of the bus. The boy was deeply moved by this exercise, and understood something about prejudice and what it does to the soul. "We have nothing of this sort in India," he concluded. "The textbook material itself is so large in extent that there is barely enough time to complete it through classroom teaching. Project work, plays, trips to historical places are just out of question. The emphasis on cramming textbooks (without the need to consult original sources) has had a telling effect on the reading habits of Indians as such."[63] The contrast between the United States and India is perhaps too simple, since not all U.S. schools are so imaginative, and these arts-related activities are increasingly being cut back.

As we saw, the BJP-authored textbooks are dismal academically. They are equally dismal pedagogically. By and large they are an insult to the minds of children. Besides the errors and bad English, besides the absence of attention to evidence and how a historical narrative is constructed from incomplete evidence, they are simply aimed at regurgitation. Even in books allegedly written for seventeen-year-olds, the questions at the ends of chapters ask for replication of what has been presented in the text itself, not for any more ambitious or critical use of intelligence. At the end of the chapter on religious tensions in *Contemporary India,* the (fifteen-year-old) student is asked: "What is fundamentalism? Mention some of the characteristics of a Fundamentalist."[64] Clearly, the authors are looking for the account that has just been presented, with all its dubious features. At the end of Jain's chapter on Akbar, her seventeen-year-old readers are asked: "Give an account of Akbar's campaigns against the Rajput states." "Describe the nature of Akbar's forays into the Deccan." And so on, including "Can the Mughal state be described as militaristic in character?"[65] (Well, yes, if the narrative dwells on this to the relative neglect of other achievements.) Nowhere is there a suggestion that students might reflect about controversies, evaluate evidence in their own right, and come to their own conclusions.

In these respects, the old books were apparently not ideal either—although the old history books at least offered a more nuanced and pluralistic narrative, and thus prepared children better for the process of real historical thinking. Habib's series is also not ideal, but at least it includes large stretches of primary text and explains the methodologies that real archaeologists, linguists, and historians use, opening the possibility of a more searching classroom pedagogy.

Kumar's and Agarwal's criticisms of the pedagogy of textbooks, old and new, and of the classroom methods associated with them badly need to be taken seriously and widely debated. Such Tagorean ideas, however, are not being much debated. Indeed, Indian academics outside of West Bengal, and to some extent even there, tend to treat Tagore's ideas about imagination and the role of the arts as dated, or even as precious, next to the all-important project of beating back bad ideology. Many do emphasize the importance of critical thinking: thus Mushirul Hasan, in a recent article on the textbook controversy,

stresses the importance of independence of mind and critical rationality for Nehru's entire educational program; clearly, Hasan himself considers these values central to good education in a pluralistic democracy. He quotes Nehru: "keep your windows and doors of your mind always open. Let all winds from the four corners of the earth blow in to refresh your mind, to give you ideas, to strengthen you."[66] Like many others, however, Hasan goes on to focus on the content of textbooks and does not discuss issues of classroom or even textbook pedagogy.

Outside the academy, things are much worse, since the cherished wish of middle-class parents is for the admission of their children into one of India's prestigious institutes of technology and management. Economic success is seen as the important kind of success to aim at, and that aim is seen as one to which humanistic and artistic study are irrelevant. The United States has similar problems, although our long tradition of liberal education at the college and university level prevents parents (so far) from demanding only a technical education. The fact that democracy's health depends on critical thinking and imaginative capacities is rarely acknowledged in either country.

These problems, like those raised in the *Pratichi Report*, are very difficult to solve. For similar reasons, then, they might be dangerous goals to announce, for a government eager to establish a record of good performance. At the same time, however, the policy of "Don't attempt the difficult" would be a cowardly one, and let us hope that the current government is not cowardly. Unlike the Pratichi issues, pedagogical issues do not appear to require huge new expenditures: NGOs often teach inspiringly and progressively with very few resources. A solution will, however, require infusing a new spirit into the pedagogical process and formulating a set of goals to orient it.

What Ought to Be Done?

What should a pluralistic democracy be trying to achieve in primary and secondary education? Three capacities, all of them central for Tagore, must be developed if a democracy is to have citizens who can function well in a pluralistic society that is part of an interdependent world.[67] (I shall say no more here about scientific and technological abilities, not because these are unimportant, but because they are in no danger of

getting lost in India or in any other modern democracy, given the demand for success in the global market.) First is a capacity stressed by both Tagore and Nehru: the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions, for living what, following Socrates, we may call "the examined life." This means a life that accepts no belief as authoritative simply because it has been handed down by tradition or become familiar through habit; a life that questions all beliefs, statements, and arguments and accepts only those that survive reason's demand for consistency and for justification. Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment. Testing of this sort frequently produces challenges to tradition, as Socrates knew well when he defended himself against the charge of "corrupting the young." But he defended his activity on the grounds that a polity needs citizens who can think for themselves rather than simply deferring to authority, who can reason together about their choices rather than just trading claims and counterclaims. He compared himself to a gadfly on the back of a noble but sluggish horse: he was stinging the Athenian polity to wake it up, so that it could conduct its business in a more reflective and reasonable way. Modern democracies, like ancient Athens, but even more so, given the nature of modern media, are prone to hasty and sloppy reasoning and to the substitution of invective for real deliberation. India (like the United States) needs Socratic teaching to fulfill the promise of democratic citizenship. One of the BJP's greatest educational failures was its failure to encourage independent critical analysis and self-sufficient judgment.

Critical thinking is particularly crucial in a society that needs to come to grips with the presence of people who differ by ethnicity, caste, and religion. We will have a chance at an adequate dialogue across cultural boundaries only if young citizens know how to engage in dialogue and deliberation in the first place. And they will know how to do that only if they learn how to examine themselves and to think about the reasons why they are inclined to support one thing rather than another—rather than, as so often happens, seeing political debate as simply a way of boasting or getting an advantage for their own side. When politicians bring simplistic propaganda their way, as politicians in every country have a way of doing, young people will have a hope of preserving independence only if they know how to think critically about what

they hear, testing its logic and its concepts and imagining alternatives to it. Such learning also teaches a new attitude to people with whom one disagrees.

Consider the case of Billy Tucker, a nineteen-year-old student in an American business college who was required, as a part of his degree, to take a series of "liberal arts" courses, including one in philosophy. Coincidentally his instructor, Krishna Mallick, was an Indian American originally from Kolkata, familiar with Tagore's educational ideal and an excellent practitioner of it. Students in her class began by learning about the life and death of Socrates, and Tucker was strangely moved that such a man would give up life itself for the pursuit of the argument. Then they learned a little formal logic, and Tucker was delighted to find that he got a high score on a test in that: he had never before thought he could do well in something abstract and intellectual. Next they analyzed political speeches and editorials, looking for logical flaws. Finally, in the last phase of the course, they did research for debates on issues of the day. Tucker was surprised to discover that he was being asked to argue against the death penalty, although he actually favors it. He had never understood, he said, that one could produce arguments for a position that one does not hold oneself. This experience gave him a new attitude to political discussion: now he is more inclined to respect the opposing position and to be curious about the arguments on both sides, rather than seeing the discussion as simply a way of making boasts and assertions. The following year he took another course from Mallick, not part of his requirement, on Gandhi and the philosophy of nonviolent resistance.

This transformation is precisely what Socrates, and Tagore, had in mind. The idea that one will take responsibility for one's own reasoning and exchange ideas with others in an atmosphere of mutual respect is essential to the peaceful resolution of differences, both within a nation and in a world increasingly polarized by ethnic and religious conflict. Tucker was already a high school graduate, but it is possible, and essential, to encourage critical thinking from the very beginning of a child's education. The girls in Bihar had this experience. From the start, their education was aimed at developing their critical and self-critical capacities, at freeing them from the authority of tradition to think for themselves. This freedom is of particular urgency for women, who are so often encouraged to be passive followers of tradition.

To this goal, a second is closely linked. Tagore called his university Visva-Bharati, "All the World," for a reason. Citizens who cultivate their capacity for effective democratic citizenship need an ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. They have to understand both the differences that make understanding difficult between groups and nations and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential, if common problems are to be solved. Doing this means learning quite a lot both about nations other than one's own and about the different religions and other groups that are part of one's own nation. The international part of this ability is particularly difficult to cultivate in the United States; most Americans feel perfectly able to go through life without learning about other nations. Indians are less likely to sustain a comparable degree of ignorance. To that extent, the educator in India begins with an advantage; but this is not to say that a great deal of work does not have to be done to make the understanding of other nations and cultures complex and nuanced, rather than based on fear and prejudice.

Still more delicate, perhaps, is the related task of understanding differences internal to one's own nation, an area in which India and the United States face similar challenges. An adequate education for pluralistic democracy must be a multicultural education, one that acquaints students with some fundamentals about the histories and cultures of the many different groups (cultural, economic, religious, gender-based) with whom they share laws and institutions. History, economics, and political science all play a role in the pursuit of this understanding. There is no easier source of disdain and neglect than ignorance and the sense of the inevitable naturalness of one's own way.

This is where good textbooks are indeed important. A good textbook will convey facts in a balanced and accurate way and will give all the narratives their due. It will reveal the complexity of the nation, both past and present, and it will help students to understand the internal complexities of groups (Muslims, Christians, the rural poor) that might easily be viewed in too simplistic and monolithic a way. This task includes showing students how and why different groups interpret evidence differently and construct different narratives. Even the best textbook will not succeed at this complex task unless it is presented to-

gether with a pedagogy that fosters critical thinking, the critical scrutiny of conflicting source materials, and active learning (learning by doing) about the difficulties of constructing a historical narrative.

As the stories of the dowry play in Bihar and the civil rights play in Virginia indicate, however, citizens cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone. They also need the ability to imagine what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from themselves, to be intelligent readers of that person's story, to have the experiences, whether joyful or painful, that someone so placed would have. The third ability that pupils in a democracy need to attain is what we might call the narrative imagination. As Tagore wrote, "We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy . . . But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed."[68]

The narrative imagination is cultivated, above all, through literature and the arts. Reliance on the arts was the most revolutionary aspect of Tagore's curriculum, as it was also of Dewey's. Preparing citizens to understand one another is not the only function of the arts in a curriculum, of course, but it is one extremely important function, and there are many ways in which such courses may focus on the requirements of citizenship. Through the imagination we are able to achieve a kind of insight into the experience of another group or person that it is very difficult to attain in daily life—particularly when our world has constructed sharp separations between groups, and suspicions that make any encounter difficult. The arts also offer children opportunities for learning through their own creative activity, something that Dewey particularly emphasized. To put on a play about dowry (or a play about racism in the Jim Crow South) is to learn about it in a way that is likely to seem more meaningful to a child than the reading of a sociological account. Learning about hardship and discrimination enters the personality at a deeper level.

The arts are also crucial sources of both freedom and community. When people put on a play together, they have to learn to go beyond tradition and authority, if they are going to express themselves well. And the sort of community created by the arts is nonhierarchical, a valuable model of the reciprocity that a good democracy will also foster in its political processes. Tagore urged young women and men to express themselves freely through their bodies and to join with him in a kind of profoundly egalitarian play. The scandal of this freedom, as young women of good family suddenly turned up on the Kolkata stage, shook convention and tradition to their foundations. So, too, with the dowry play: to have young teenage girls get up in front of their entire village to perform that play created a new form of social reciprocity.

Finally, the arts are great sources of joy for children, and indeed for adults as well. Participating in plays, songs, and dances fills children with joy, and this joy carries over into the rest of their education. Amita Sen's book about Tagore as choreographer is aptly titled, in English, *Joy in All Work,* and it shows how all the "regular" education in Santiniketan, the education that enabled these students to perform very well in standard examinations, was infused with passion and delight because of the way in which education was combined with dance and song. Children do not like to sit still all day; but they also do not know automatically how to express emotion with their bodies in dance. Tagore's expressive but also extremely disciplined dance regimen was an essential source of creativity, thought, and freedom for all pupils, but particularly, perhaps, for women, whose bodies had been taught to be shame-ridden and inexpressive. This is Amita Sen's general description of what Tagore was trying to convey for and with children through dance:

> His dance was a dance of emotion. The playful clouds in the sky, the shivering of the wind in the leaves, light glistening on the grass, moonlight flooding the earth, the blossoming and fading of flowers, the murmur of dry leaves—the pulsing of joy in a man's heart, or the pangs of sorrow, are all expressed in this expressive dance's movements and expressions.[69]

In this passage we hear the voice of an older woman recalling her childhood experience. How extraordinary that the emotions and the poetry of the child live on so vigorously in the woman, and what a tribute this is to the capacity of this sort of education for a kind of enlivening that continues on in one's life when all specific learned facts are forgotten. Furthermore, Amita Sen makes it perfectly clear that the dance experience was itself highly disciplined and a fine source of the understanding

of discipline for children; it was also interwoven with learning of more traditional types.

As Tagore knew, and as radical artists have often emphasized, the arts, by generating pleasure in connection with acts of subversion and cultural criticism, produce an endurable and even attractive dialogue with the prejudices of the past, rather than one fraught with fear and defensiveness. The great African American writer Ralph Ellison, for example, called his novel *Invisible Man* "a raft of perception, hope, and entertainment" that could help the American democracy "negotiate the snags and whirlpools" that stand between it and "the democratic idea."[70] Entertainment is crucial to the ability of the arts to offer perception and hope. It is not only the experience of the performer, then, that is so important for democracy; it is also the way in which performance offers a venue for exploring difficult issues without crippling anxiety. The entire village found the girls' dowry play delightful, rather than deeply threatening.

At the heart of all three of the Tagorean capacities is the idea of freedom: the freedom of the child's mind to engage critically with tradition; the freedom to imagine one's citizenship in both national and world terms, and to negotiate multiple allegiances with knowledge and confidence; the freedom to reach out in the imagination, allowing another person's experience into oneself. It is really freedom to which the RSS *shakha* and the "saffronized" curriculum are most deeply opposed: both seek the imprisonment of children within a single "correct" ideology. This fearful curtailment of freedom can also be a property of reactive left-wing conceptions, which prefer solidarity and correctness to the possibility that someone might independently choose another way. But it is only the risky idea of critical and imaginative freedom that offers India's democracy lasting strength as it faces an uncertain future.

What Can Be Done?

What can be done to make education for freedom a reality in India's government schools? At least some state-sponsored initiatives, at the primary education level, have had a promising focus on the renewal of pedagogy and on critical thinking. A program called the District Primary Education Program (DPEP), initiated in 1994 (before the BJP came to power, but continued during its ascendancy), had promising features. Funded largely by external sources such as the World Bank, UNICEF, the European Commission, and foreign aid from other nations, it focused on community leadership and control, the formation of local education committees, and targeted intervention for girls and for children with disabilities.[71] Workshops on pedagogy were a central part of the program, with the cooperation of NCERT. Gender equity was also emphasized; one of the goals of the program was to increase primary school enrollment of girls. The arts were often part of local initiatives under the program.

This program and a similar successor program have had, however, a very uneven regional implementation. Their reliance on external private funding also strikes many people as problematic, because it suggests the privatization of public education and creates a handy excuse for government (both state and local) not to increase expenditure for school facilities and teacher salaries. Nonetheless, these are features that should be pursued in new initiatives, funded, it is to be hoped, by state and national government.

At the state level, again, there are some success stories. I have heard particular praise for Sheela Dixit's attention to pedagogy in the Delhi schools and textbooks (the latter superintended by Krishna Kumar, with his thoughtful educational values). On the whole, however, these issues seem to have had less attention than their importance warrants.

Culturally speaking, India seems like just the place where all three parts of this model set of values should be flourishing. No nation, perhaps, is more given to disputation and critical thinking. Indians love to argue, and their tradition of argument is tolerant and pluralistic.[72] Few nations have had such a long awareness of a tremendous range of internal differences, ethnic, cultural, and regional. Few have had such distinction in the arts or contributed so much to the life of the imagination. So why do these glories of the Indian tradition not play a more central and structuring role in primary and secondary education today?

Progressive experiments in education emphasizing critical thinking and imaginative learning always exact higher financial and human costs than education as rote learning. Teaching critical thinking and the arts requires a lower pupil-teacher ratio than rote learning, and more emo-

tional investment on the part of teachers. It is understandable, if not commendable, that progressive reforms were neglected in the effort to jump-start education on a mass scale, and especially to build the educational basis for progress in industry and science.

Another related factor is a general neglect of the public importance of the humanities that began with Nehru, and that has been greatly exacerbated by the global market. Indian middle-class parents today do not value arts and humanities as goals for their children. To get voters to support expenditures for pedagogical reform and for the arts and humanities, it will first be necessary to convince them that they matter; this will be a difficult task. Even though the Pratichi survey showed a great deal of parent discontent, this discontent focused largely on facilities, costs, and basic teacher performance. The demands of middle-class parents are unlikely to push education in the direction of thoughtful and imaginative humanistic pedagogy. If computer science were taught as poorly in schools as critical thinking is now, then what a scandal there would be. But people don't raise a complaint about what they themselves don't care about. Fortunately, the humanities are not neglected in education run by NGOs, particularly education for women.

What might be some good steps to take to bring to government schools the excitement and vitality that are found in the best of NGO education? First, a national dialogue might be fostered, with considerable emphasis and publicity, about how education can enliven rather than deaden young minds. Representatives from the teaching professions, from NGOs, from the academy, from government, and from the arts could come together and talk about this problem. If as many words were devoted to the dying bird as to the plumage of textbooks, good ideas would be bound to surface. Students could take part in this dialogue, and university students who were recently in school.

Second, this national dialogue might include, and focus on, the question of how to revive the humanities, so that, from primary education to the university research level, they make the social contribution they are capable of making. Much can be done to make humanities careers (in school teaching, but also in scholarship and university teaching) more attractive to talented and thoughtful young people: awards, publicity, all these things have their influence, especially on trend-conscious middle-class parents.

Third, government (both national and state) could make funds available for districts that want to reform and to carry out good experiments in teaching: the best aspects of DPEP, consistently and not tokenistically applied. Pilot projects in different regions can yield a lot of information about what can work and what may not work; but they will not happen without funding. It would be difficult to think of any better use for government money.

Fourth, both national and state government can, and should, focus on how to impart new visibility, prestige, earning power, and dignity to the teaching profession. Professions have a life of their own. If they are backwaters, held in low esteem, many talented people will not be willing to go there. That is what has happened to a great extent with school teaching in the United States, which is poorly paid and of relatively low prestige. I think something like this has begun to happen in India, although at one time school teaching had high prestige. There is nothing inevitable about such questions of prestige; they are matters of fashion. (School teaching has high prestige, for example, in France and Germany.) So somehow teaching must be made more fashionable, and government can think of creative ways to do this: by raising teacher salaries; by conducting national seminars for schoolteachers that give them a sense that ongoing learning and debate are what their life is about, and that this is a dignified activity, encouraged at the highest level; by offering awards for excellent teaching that include a lot of publicity for the teacher's creative work with students. (These awards would be utterly counterproductive if they were based on the scores of the students in national exams.)

Then, fifth, government and universities need to think of ways to assess student performance that depend far less on rote learning and the regurgitation of textbook materials. A new system of assessment will require more staff and more time for the assessment process. University admissions, for example, will need to be a process of individualized assessment based upon interviews, essays that are more individualized and less based on textbooks, letters of recommendation, and so forth. But that can be done, and some countries do it. The United States has suffered in some ways from the extreme degree of decentralization and local control that we have always had: children get widely different degrees of support and expenditure depending on where they are born.

But the good that has come of it is that universities have no quick and easy way to make admissions decisions. They have to look at the whole person, and to hire large staffs of people who are trained to make such nuanced assessments.

Should there be national standards at all? The very existence of national standards creates movement in the direction of ossification and death, as we are now beginning to see in the United States. The No Child Left Behind Act has the ostensible purpose of evening out the discrepancies in learning and opportunity that are the main flaw in our decentralized system. But already the urge to standardize has banefully crept in; for how can one compare student performance in different regions but through some kind of standardized tests? And then, of course, teachers, knowing that their school's funding depends on the performance on that test, teach to the test, not to the student. Could a higher degree of decentralization work in India? That was the idea behind DPEP. The same sort of vigorous decentralization that the *panchayat* system represents might work better than national and state-based standards in education, although it is also possible that this would simply leave too many loopholes for laziness and corruption. At any rate, the sort of national standard that makes sense is the sort that encourages the ability to think and write independently, to express a personal viewpoint with good arguments, and to show a grasp of the complexity and difficulty of real historical, political, and scientific thinking.

Sixth, to the extent that education is still based upon textbooks, these can and should be books that stimulate critical thinking, a sense of intellectual complexity and divergence, and the ability to work with primary sources.

Seventh, and in some ways most important of all, the arts can and should be given particular emphasis in education at all levels. The many great artists of whom India is justly proud could be brought together to generate ideas about how this can best be done.

Tagore's experiments do not require a charismatic leader or the unusual beauty of Santiniketan for their success. The imagination is a hardy plant. When it is not killed, it can thrive in many places, as it thrives in the Sithamarhi district of Bihar, as it thrives in similar projects I have observed in other regions. If NGOs that have no equipment and

no money, no computers and no paper, only heart and mind and a few slates, can accomplish so much, there is no excuse for government schools to lag so far behind. The nation's failure to take Tagore's legacy to heart spells grave danger for democracy.

Education is crucial to understanding and coping with the two "clashes" that all modern democracies face. To cope well with the clash between pluralism and fanaticism, young citizens need to learn about the different groups that their nation contains, in an atmosphere of respect, criticism, self-criticism, and genuine curiosity. To cope well with the clash within the individual self, they need a pedagogy focused on the cultivation of the (self-)critical capacities and the imagination. Democratic citizenship requires constant vigilance against tyranny by national factions and tyranny by the worse parts of the self. Only the sort of education Tagore envisaged is capable of meeting that challenge.

Tagore expressed his wishes for the future of education in India in a poem that would be a fine motto for the Ministry of Education—not only in India, but in any democracy that wants to remain one:

> Where the mind is without fear
> And the head is held high,
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken
> Up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving
> Stretches its arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason
> Has not lost its way into the
> Dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward
> By thee into ever-widening
> Thought and action—
> Into that heaven of freedom,
> My Father,
> Let my country awake.[73]

9 THE DIASPORA COMMUNITY

Whereas the United States is deeply enriched by its Indian American residents;
Whereas the Indian American community and the graduates of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) in the United States have made valuable and significant contributions to society in every profession and discipline; and
Whereas IIT graduates are highly committed and dedicated to research, innovation, and promotion of trade and international cooperation between India and the United States: Now, therefore, be it
Resolved, That the House of Representatives—
(1) recognizes the valuable and significant contributions of Indian Americans to American society;
(2) honors the economic innovation attributable to graduates of the Indian Institutes of Technology; and
(3) urges all Americans to recognize the contributions of Indian Americans and have a greater appreciation of the role Indian Americans have played in helping to advance and enrich American society.

H.R. (House Resolution) 227, April 26, 2005

A Model Minority

On a dark, rainy August day, my research assistants and I visit the dazzling Swaminarayan temple in Bartlett, Illinois, about an hour northwest of Chicago, a primary enclave of the Gujarati community in the United States. For the time being one of my assistants, Shaheen Haji, a Gujarati Muslim from California, has assumed the Hindu name of

Meenakshi Mehta so that we can hear opinions about Muslims frankly expressed. When I introduce her under this name, the face of our guide, a young man recently arrived from Gujarat, lights up with sympathy and recognition. With the beatific smile and the intense earnestness that one associates with members of authoritarian cults, he lectures us about the sect's beliefs, telling us that its followers believe that the voice of the sect's spiritual leader is the direct voice of God. Then, pointing to the beautiful carved limestone and marble ceiling, he asks us whether we know why the ceiling glows as it does. I don't know, but I fully expect a spiritual answer. Our guide's eyes light up again. "Fiber-optic cables!" he says. "We are the first to bring this technology to a temple."

Was the climate of religious hatred in Gujarat made in the U.S.A.? Many people think that the Hindu Indian American community has played a significant role in funding the spread of hatred in India in general, in Gujarat in particular. They believe, as well, that young Hindu Indian Americans, deeply influenced by the ideology of the HSS and VHP, are growing up full of prejudice and suspicion. To what extent are these fears well founded? And how does my guide's strange combination of ideological docility with technological sophistication contribute to the situation?

Indian Americans have, for better or for worse, the status of a "model minority." Among the largest ethnonational groups migrating legally to the United States, they currently number around 1.6 million, or 0.6 percent of the U.S. population. They are the largest subgroup of South Asian Americans, and the third-largest subgroup of Asian Americans, after Chinese and Filipino Americans.[1] According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, they have the highest median income of any ethnic group in the United States ($60,093).[2] They also have unusually high intellectual attainments. Many are doctors, engineers, and information-technology experts. Many others are hotel owners and small business owners. (Recall that Narendra Modi's original invitation to the United States was issued by the Asian-American Hotel Owners Association.) Many came for graduate school in these and other fields and decided to remain. Their greater fluency in English often gives them advantages over graduate students from other parts of Asia.

Indian Americans are as diverse as India itself: Muslims, Hindus,

and Christians, speakers of all the major Indian languages. The largest single subgroup is probably Gujaratis, who by one informal estimate account for 40 percent of the U.S. Indian American population.[3] Indian Americans are also diverse in occupation, income, and culture. But the stereotype exemplified by H.R. 277 has considerable truth: Indian Americans are perceived as (because many of them are) a success story in scientific and technological achievement, a hard-working minority that enriches America and is therefore to be praised.

There is a negative stereotype connected with these images; that of hypercompetitiveness, exemplified, for example, by the (real) Indian father in the much-praised documentary film *Spellbound,* who pushes his son to study lists of words for hours and hours in addition to his schoolwork, meanwhile promising a large donation for prayer in Hindu temples and for poverty relief in India—*if* his son wins the spelling competition. But Mr. Kadakia's excesses are, to Americans, acceptable and even lovable. This is the sort of immigrant community that Americans eagerly embrace.

Despite its success and public acceptability, however, this new minority still faces discrimination. Sikhs, for example, were often harassed after 9/11, because ignorant Americans confused their turbans with those of the Taliban. The hostility toward polytheism that runs straight through the history of Anglo-Indian relations can be found in the United States, too, if in a milder form. Meanwhile Indian Americans who are Muslims face yet other problems, being linked ignorantly to Arab Muslim terrorism. Indian Americans are only beginning to make an impact on U.S. politics at the national level: one congressman from California in the 1950s (Dalip Singh Saund, first elected in 1956), several candidates more recently, but no current members of the House or Senate. Both of these bodies have an India caucus, but chaired by people who have no close connections with India. None of the top 100 research universities has yet had an Indian American president.

A primary reason for this lag is that Indian Americans were for the most part excluded from the United States until the 1960s. The Immigration Act of 1924 and, later, the Nationality Act of 1952 allowed virtually no immigration from India under their "national origins" quota systems, which restricted immigration to an annual quota based on proportions in the population in 1890. From 1820 to 1960 only

13,607 people emigrated from the Indian subcontinent, and many of these did not remain in the United States. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 made the regime far less discriminatory, with each country permitted a quota of at least 20,000 per year. So immigration of Indians in large numbers is a relatively recent phenomenon.[4]

Thus the "diaspora community" occupies an insecure position—praised for its financial contribution to American success, but not honored by the highest rewards that America gives its own. In this situation, it is natural that a search for identity would focus on a close tie to the motherland, all the more since many immigrants have family members who still live in India and think of their success as a way of contributing to its prosperity.

What, however, shall be the basis of their diaspora identity, given the community's internal linguistic and cultural diversity? The idea of Hindutva in its most innocuous form, that is, the idea of Hinduness, just being Hindu, offers an attractive answer to this question for many Indians. Consciousness of being Hindu is already often greater in the United States than in India, where being Hindu is the unmarked majority thing to be. Membership in organizations such as the VHP-US and the HSS (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, the U.S. branch of the RSS) seems attractive as a way to feel solidarity with other community members and to bring up children who are conscious of their Hindu roots. HSS *shakhas* exist in most major U.S. cities and many towns and suburbs. Typically they provide much more by way of community organization and outreach than do organizations sponsored by the Indian government. When our local consul-general in Chicago started an Indian-American Friendship Association in 2003—partly in order to provide a cultural alternative to the HSS and VHP, bringing Indians both Hindu and Muslim together with a diverse group of Americans around ideas of peace and nonviolence—he had no funds to do the work, and despite his great energy the association got off to a slow beginning. His successor, closer in ideology to the HSS and VHP, let the association lapse, preferring to pursue those other connections. The Indian Muslim Council views the new Chicago consul-general not as an open enemy of Muslims, but as someone who is surely not interested in fostering interreligious friendship.[5]

Are there sinister connections between the HSS/VHP in the

United States and violence against Muslims (and Christians) in India? The diaspora community is wealthy. It sends a lot of money back to India. It has been alleged that some of these funds, given in the United States for purposes of welfare and poverty relief in India, are often diverted to support violence against Muslims and other highly sectarian activities. At the same time the Hindu Students Council, a VHP-linked group, has been charged with supporting disruptive activities on U.S. campuses against professors who teach Hinduism. And the Swaminarayan sect, a sect of Hinduism that originated in Gujarat, has rapidly grown in wealth and popularity throughout the United States, fueling suspicion that it might also be a source of anti-Muslim sentiment and funding.

Is any of these suspicions well grounded?

The IDRF: Funding Hate?

When people in the United States make donations to charity, they naturally want to get the charitable deduction. Although some of the larger charitable organizations in India are registered as charities in the United States, many such organizations are not. Umbrella charities have therefore come into existence, U.S. agencies that, rather like the United Way, distribute money to a wide range of charities back in India, meanwhile offering their donors U.S. charitable status. One of the largest of these is the Maryland-based International Development and Relief Fund (IDRF). In November 2002 Sabrang Communications, a group connected with Teesta Setalvad and her excellent investigative work in Gujarat, published a report online titled *The Foreign Exchange of Hate: IDRF and the American Funding of Hindutva*. The report had a long list of authors, but the primary author appears to have been Biju Mathew, who holds an endowed chair in the College of Business Administration at Rider University in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

The report sticks to primary documents, quoting what the leaders of the IDRF say about their purposes on various official documents that they are required to file with the Internal Revenue Service, and comparing what they say with the record of action by the organizations

in India that they fund. According to the report, very little of the money donated to the IDRF goes directly to charitable work; two-thirds is channeled to organizations under the umbrella of the RSS, which often have a variety of purposes other than poverty relief. All in all, less than 20 percent of the funds go to organizations that are not openly sectarian or affiliated with the Sangh Parivar. Sometimes poverty relief is closely connected to conversion or "Hinduization," encouraging people, usually in rural areas, to become more observant in traditional Hindu practices, or to return to them if they have converted to another religion. Some of the money is used for "purely religious" purposes. Even the welfare money that is given is frequently doled out in a sectarian way. Finally, several of the RSS organizations to which money flows are "directly involved in large scale violence against Muslim and Christian minorities."[6]

There are some major problems with the Mathew report, which is on the whole quite alarmist, even hysterical, in tone. Like some Indians, who think of conversion as always taking place at the point of a sword, the authors clearly have a deep suspicion of conversion and of any efforts that strongly encourage people to return to Hindu practices. One should certainly deplore any use of force or coercion in the conversion process, but it seems quite another matter to deplore the use of charitable funds to make converts and to encourage religious practices—so long as donors are correctly informed. Much of the anti-Christian and anti-Muslim feeling in India today stems from the idea that a religion that makes converts cannot be peaceable. This is of course a false notion, and one that we should all actively repudiate—as did Nehru and the constitutional framers, who protected the right to proselytize in the Fundamental Rights section of the Constitution. It is quite disturbing to see the authors, who clearly oppose prejudice against religious groups, buying into the same prejudices that have made the lives of Muslims and Christians in India difficult. Hindus traditionally do not proselytize, but there is nothing wrong with their doing so.

Nor is there anything wrong with giving money to charity for purposes of proselytization or religious activity. Many Americans do this all the time, usually supporting their own religions. Such donations are

protected by the IRS definition of charitable donation. Donations to explicitly sectarian religious bodies account for more than 70 percent of the charitable donations of Americans.[7]

Typically, as in India, U.S. churches use the money that donors give them in a variety of ways. If a donor insists on earmarking it for a particular kind of welfare or poverty program, it is usually possible to arrange this (as, the report concedes, it is in the case of the IDRF). Much more often, though, U.S. churches prefer (as what organization does not) unmarked donations, so that they can use the money at their own discretion. Donors to U.S. religious bodies can expect, as a matter of course, that some of their money will be used for welfare programs and some for religious activities—unless they stipulate otherwise. Most people have no problem with this arrangement, because they like to encourage people to practice the religion that they themselves love.

When a *government agency* gives taxpayer money to or through such religious bodies, then the distinction between religious and secular activities becomes very important. A significant problem that has emerged with regard to President Bush's "faith-based initiatives" is that churches tend to mix charitable activities with proselytizing or to condition the receipt of charitable donations on adherence to religious practices. This is highly problematic when the donor is a government agency, because constitutional ideas of nonestablishment and equal protection become relevant.

The RSS does a lot of welfare work, some of it very good. Indeed, one way in which it has expanded its base is by performing better than governments and other NGOs at some of these tasks. But it would surprise nobody if an RSS charity were to use part of the donated money for religious uses also.

Many private schools in India are run by Christian churches, and some of these teach (or it is feared that they teach) that Hindu deities are not really gods. Even if they don't say disparaging things about Hinduism, they certainly do not focus on helping students learn about their own tradition. Some of the programs attacked by the Mathew report as objectionably sectarian are afterschool programs designed to correct the deficiencies of the curricula at these schools.[8] Mathew has made no convincing argument against such programs.

The authors' indignation about the alleged diversion of funds to

sectarian purposes seems to be based on the assumption that for a large wealthy charity to give only, or primarily, to Hindu organizations reinforces inequalities that Christians and Muslims already suffer. The report tends to equate an activity's being "sectarian" with its being antiminority. The two are, however, distinct concepts.

The report is in that sense defective. It does, however, raise two very serious questions. First, has the IDRF been honest about the fact that much of the money it collects will be used for religious purposes? Has it been adequately up-front with both donors and the IRS? Second, is there evidence that the money goes to support violence? On the first matter, the report shows clearly that there are serious issues that need to be addressed by the IDRF. In its official submission to the tax code, the organization states that its purpose is "assisting in rural development, tribal welfare, and urban poor [*sic*]." No mention is made of religious purposes. Furthermore, the organization has denied any links to the RSS and VHP. In an online "Response to Recent Malicious Media Reports," the IDRF wrote: "It [the IDRF] is not affiliated to any group, 'ism,' ideology, political party."[9] In another online exchange, Ramesh Rao quotes a vice-president of the IDRF as saying, "There is no relation between VHP/RSS and IDRF. Fullpoint."[10] The report on the IDRF provides ample evidence that much of the money goes to Hindu organizations that use at least some of the money in religious activities. This purpose should have been mentioned in the IRS documents. And the statement that the IDRF has no connection with the RSS, though it may be formally true, seems misleading if indeed, as the report convincingly argues, much of the money goes to organizations in India that do have RSS connections. Again, there need be nothing particularly subversive about these decisions, given that the RSS does run legitimate charities. But it should be made clear to both donors and the IRS what activities of these organizations are being funded. People who don't like the RSS or who believe that the RSS is capable of channeling funds to unpleasant uses should be aware that if they give to the IDRF they may be helping the RSS. This possibility is present, and should be disclosed, even if everyone involved in the IDRF believes that people's fears of the RSS are ungrounded.

As for the funding of violence, the report itself admits that this is a very murky area, where only indirect evidence exists. The documenta-

tion shows clearly that the IDRF funds organizations in states in which communal violence has occurred. Some of the organizations in Gujarat may have been involved in the Gujarat riots. Some (for example, the VHP and Bajrang Dal) almost certainly were. But because the state has stonewalled all investigation about the Gujarat riots, it would be very surprising if any "paper trail" exists. If the charitable organizations named in the Mathew report deny all involvement, as they do, there is no likelihood that complicity will ever be proven.

Here an analogy may be helpful. Think about the U.S. South in the 1950s, when only the Ku Klux Klan and a few other extremists would openly admit to favoring violence, but where the whole society was suffused with attitudes that at least ignored and often condoned violence against African Americans, attitudes that clearly affected the behavior of the police and other officers of the law. Lynchings would not have occurred as they did if the law had not been prepared to look the other way and if juries had not been inclined to favor white defendants. Muslims in Gujarat today are in a position very similar to that of African Americans in the 1950s South. In such a case, if a large U.S. charity funneled lots of money to white organizations in Mississippi, one might well wonder to what extent those organizations shared the general social attitudes favoring violence and "white supremacy." One might think that any organization that focused charitable giving on Mississippi was underwriting a culture of violence. In the case of Gujarat, the organizations of the Sangh Parivar are more closely linked to violence than any neutral charity in Mississippi would have been, though less closely and clearly linked than the Klan, since the RSS has many legitimate charitable purposes. If I were a donor who wanted to help poverty in Mississippi without condoning segregation and associated violence, I would probably look for an organization whose philosophy was explicitly integrationist and whose board included a significant number of African Americans. Similarly, were I seeking to alleviate poverty in Gujarat, I would prefer an organization, even a Hindu religious organization, that has gone on record in word and deed against communal violence, and whose good works are acknowledged as good by Muslims alongside Hindus. To donate to Hindu organizations is not in itself problematic in the way that donation to all-white organizations would be in the Mississippi case, since the

Hindu religion has admirable positive values, distinct from those of other religions, while the only rationale for separating whites from blacks is racism. Still, in a context of ongoing violence one would want to make sure that the Hindu organization in question did not also have exclusionary and supremacist attitudes.

It is difficult to think that in Gujarat any all-Hindu charity is free from the attitudes that produced the massacre; these attitudes are widespread, and deeply entrenched, in Gujarati Hindu society. Associations connected with the RSS are probably less likely than others to be free of such attitudes.

The IDRF could easily dispel such suspicions by inviting onto its board prominent members of society, whether Hindu or Muslim, who have publicly condemned the violence in Gujarat, and by giving these people full access to information about the organizations funded. If the IDRF wished in addition to establish that it is nonsectarian, it would be a good idea to include prominent Muslims and Christians in this group. If it wished instead to establish that it takes a sectarian but unquestionably respectable course, it could find plenty of prominent Hindus, both in India and in the United States, who have gone on record as opposing violence. Surely the IDRF has strong reasons for clarifying its position on violence, in light of the evidentiary difficulties created by the breakdown of the rule of law in Gujarat. Moreover, questions need to be pressed concerning whether the IDRF has incorrectly represented its purposes on its tax forms.

How has the IDRF replied? Unfortunately, the reply itself raises further questions. On the one hand, the head of the IDRF, Dr. Vinod Prakash, asked the new head of the HSS in America, Professor Ved Prakash Nanda, to look into IDRF activities for himself. Nanda, very concerned about the allegations in the Mathew report, says of Prakash: "He has checked out where all this money goes. Money does go to the RSS also, but then those [are] RSS schools, etc. I have asked him point-blank if there is any truth in the report. I have gone to some of the places where the money goes. When the earthquake happened I had the full account of where and how the money was spent."[11] Nanda of course cannot say definitively that no money is spent funding violence, and he could not make a well-grounded claim about the other allegations unless he had examined all the places funded by the IDRF

up close and in greater detail than investigative journalists and others who have long tried to get this information. Thus his claim that the Mathew report is "absolutely, totally wrong" is overconfident, making him seem somewhat naive and gullible, a person who believes what he wants to believe. But at any rate, the tactic of inviting people to check things out for themselves is the right way of rebutting the charges, and Prakash is to be commended for inviting Nanda, who is evidently a person of integrity, to inspect the organization. It would be better still were the invited monitors to include people not closely linked to the RSS(HSS) and VHP, and who have openly condemned the Gujarat violence—including, one might hope, some prominent Muslims and Christians.

Other defenders of the IDRF have chosen a much less satisfactory tactic. The Bajrang Dal website HinduUnity.org, whose violent tirades against Muslims we have noted earlier, immediately blasted Biju Mathew, calling him "a sympathizer of fanatic Christian Missionaries and Islamic jihad organizations in India" and a "Communist." Readers were urged to report to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service the "illegal" presence of a foreign Communist in the United States.[12] (Mathew has been teaching at Rider for many years, and clearly has a legitimate immigration status.) A long online attack on Mathew, commenting on the Bajrang Dal attack, asserts that "there is a law that disallows Communists from settling down in the United States." (Again, although there has been no such prohibition since 1990, it is the sort of falsehood that many people might believe, given our history.) As "evidence" of his political views, the author writes: "Biju Matthews [*sic*] has contributed to the Communist Party Magazine." The author, Sekhar Ramakrishnan, goes on to say that Mathew's "ulterior and hidden agenda" is "to convert Hindus in India on a large scale to either Christianity or Islam and secondly to topple democracy in India to bring about Communism." For good measure, Mathew's participation in a rally against the Iraq War is noted.[13] Another online article, written by Mohini Surin, describes a public meeting at Hunter College in which Mathew and Teesta Setalvad talked about Gujarat. Mathew is now called "the Communist Kerala Christian associate professor," as if all were equally negative epithets. The author concludes that "there is NO persecution but too much pampering, mollycoddling and foolish appeasement of dangerous pyscopathic [*sic*] fanatical Muslims but quite the contrary."[14] There is much more in the same vein. Meanwhile, a pro-IDRF petition circulated by the organization itself attracted no Muslim signatures, a somewhat worrisome sign.[15]

Surely the cause of the IDRF is not helped by the cheap red-baiting tactics of its supporters; nor is it helped by the evident anti-Muslim sympathies of some of the most vociferous. In 2003 Ramesh Rao and others issued a long rebuttal to the Mathew report, first online, then in book form. Called *IDRF: Let the Facts Speak*, it also uses tactics that are discouraging. The authors begin by providing a good deal of data about projects funded, and make some analytically sharp points about the amorphous concept of "Hinduization" used in the Mathew report.

But then the authors oddly devote a lot of space to defending the history and politics of the RSS, an organization with which the IDRF has denied all ties. They seek to establish that the RSS, although it did little in the anti-British independence movement, did in some ways nonetheless contribute to the eventual success of that effort.[16] One is left to wonder how this account is relevant to the defense of the IDRF, if the IDRF is not deeply connected to the RSS. But if it is, then the organization has made some questionable statements, both to the tax officials and in the media.

Much of the rest of the book is devoted to personal attacks on Mathew and his coauthors. Instead of saying that some of their statements are highly speculative and unproven (as they themselves acknowledge), Rao and his fellow writers trumpet "Lies, More Lies, and Nothing But Lies"[17]—a personal attack on the authors' scholarly integrity—despite the fact that most of the Mathew report is grounded in IRS documents filed by IDRF itself. The authors are then attacked as "leftist," as having Pakistani connections, as having published in the official journal of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and so on. Mathew is from Kerala, a state whose development achievements, especially in health and education, are by now proverbial in the economic literature; those achievements took place under a democratically elected Communist government. The fact that Mathew would publish in their journal is about as surprising as the fact that an American would publish something in an official journal of the Republican Party.

In short, the Rao rebuttal has many of the same defects that are dis-

cernible in other Rao publications: instead of calmly presenting pertinent information that would allow readers to form an intelligent judgment, it launches digressions and tirades that do little to make one think well of the IDRF, to the extent that this report has its approval.

The funding controversy involves a set of questions without clear answers. Some people of goodwill and integrity believe the accusations launched against the IDRF, and other people of goodwill and integrity (such as Nanda) believe that they are groundless. We can only hope for a thorough investigation and, above all, for more frankness on the part of IDRF about its RSS connections. If the IDRF were to distance itself publicly from the segment of Gujarati society that condones violence against Muslims, and were to include on its board prominent critics of communalization, these steps would reassure donors that all was well. Meanwhile one solution for Indian Americans of goodwill, suggested by Ved Nanda of the HSS, is to focus a larger proportion of charitable giving on U.S. poverty, of which there is plenty, contributing to one's new community in ways that are easy to trace because they are local.

Forming a Diaspora Identity

Indian Americans are a remarkably diverse group. Their linguistic, regional, cultural, and religious heterogeneity makes it difficult to bring them together, in the United States, around any common national-identity platform. And yet Indian American parents of children born in the United States naturally want to take their children somewhere to learn about their cultures and their history. A small, highly heterogeneous minority surrounded by the dominant culture, with no opportunities for their children to learn the family's native language (whether Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Malayalam, or some other) in public schools and all too few opportunities to study the history and traditions of India in English, will naturally fear a loss of identity. But whereas Italian Americans, Irish Americans, Polish Americans, Greek Americans, and many other immigrant groups have cultural organizations expressive of national identity, there is no large organization for Indian Americans that offers this minority identity without at the same time offering a religious identity. The need for such an organization is widely felt, but

any such enterprise is difficult to start up, given the variety of communities that would need to be brought together. The Indian consulates of major U.S. cities would be a natural choice for such a role. However, they have no funds for this sort of activity, they have to compete with already strong and well-funded organizations established along communal lines, and the fact that the consul-generalship changes every five years must surely dissuade career civil servants from launching such ambitious enterprises.

Consuls-general are not political appointments, but their careers can depend in subtle ways on their relationship with political parties. Under the BJP government it would perhaps have been unwise to show strong support for an interreligious national organization. Even so, when Surendra Kumar arrived as consul-general in 2000, he worked hard to foster good connections with the academic community, to create interesting events involving visiting politicians and judges, and to find occasions for public celebration that were appealing to all religions and groups. Independence Day (August 15) is always celebrated at the consulate, but Kumar added an annual celebration of Gandhi's birthday, which included panels and interfaith discussions. He also founded an Indian-American Friendship Association, of which I was briefly a vice-president. The aim of this new association, announced with much fanfare, was to offer an alternative to the more religiously based organizations in the city, bringing together a group of Americans diverse in race, ethnicity, and religion (Kumar focused on having Hispanics, African Americans, and Euro-Americans as officers) and a similarly diverse group of Indians. But the association had barely begun to enroll members and raise money through dues when Kumar's term was up and he was transferred to Nairobi. Whether by design or accident, his successor (also named Kumar) has been less ambitious in this regard. While retaining strong ties with existing Hindu organizations and cooperating to some extent with the Indian Muslim Council, he has done nothing to bring the religions together, letting the Friendship Association lapse completely, for reasons that some think political. (Meanwhile, even from Kenya, Surendra Kumar continues to bring the Chicago community together, as with a large gathering he organized on our campus in June 2006.)

Indian American families in Chicago, then, have nowhere to go to

connect with their national heritage in a religiously pluralistic atmosphere. The Indian Muslim Council runs a wide variety of cultural programs targeted at Muslim families. The HSS and VHP offer Hindu Indians a wide range of family and youth programs. Some other groups (such as the Swaminarayan sect) focus on a particular regional community: children in the youth groups run by this sect at its various centers in the United States learn both the Gujarati language and Indian history, with a focus on Gujarat and the life of Swaminarayan, the seventeenth–eighteenth century Gujarati saint who began the movement. Sometimes these different groups hold interfaith activities. A growing interest in cricket in the suburbs does bring people together across communal and even national lines, with Pakistani Americans playing alongside Indian Americans. But by and large national identity is structured as a part of religious identity.

Organizations vary greatly in the degree to which they promote or discourage interreligious cooperation. A relatively unhelpful group has been the Hindu Students Council (HSC), an organization founded in 1990 (with headquarters in New Jersey), with chapters on the campuses of about seventy-five U.S. colleges and universities. This group, which claims to be a site where people can learn about Hindu heritage and culture, melds national identity with Hindu identity, suggesting that the two are inseparable. The HSC has close links to the VHPA (the U.S. wing of the VHP); it is mentioned on VHPA websites as if it is part of the organization. Many VHPA websites openly refer to the HSC as one of its projects to carry out its work for the "protection of Hindu culture." One explicitly lists the group as part of its own organizational structure in America.[18] HSC chapters have taken political stands, supporting the VHP on issues such as the building of a Ram temple at Ayodhya. Mona Mehta of the University of Chicago, one of the founders of a new alternative group of student organizations, writes: "The version of Hinduism that is 'dished out' to HSC members is highly problematic, simplistic, exclusivist and upper caste in its orientation . . . HSCs glorify Hindutva, refer to Indian culture as Hindu culture and present a simplistic version of Indian history as one of a glorious Hindu civilization that was faced with constant onslaughts at the hands of 'foreigners' such as Muslims and Christians."[19] The vast majority of Indian American students who join the organization know too little about the different positions on these issues to criticize such politicized formulations; nor do they typically know about the group's VHP links. The organization does not encourage critical discussion. And it has taken highly political positions on campuses themselves, such as the protest at Emory University against the presence of Paul Courtright in the Department of Religion; other protests against visiting lectures by Courtright have also been led by HSC on other campuses. It is very likely that many student members would not support these activities if all the various arguments and positions of the HSC were thoroughly and accurately presented to them.

Mehta and many other students of Indian origin (mostly graduate students) have supported the foundation of alternative youth groups that are progressive and pan–South Asian. These include Chingari, which means "spark" in Hindi, "a forum for discussion, reflection and action on social, political and cultural issues concerning the South Asian diasporic experience in North America";[20] OY! (Organizing Youth), a volunteer-based organization for South Asian youth, focusing on economic justice; the New York City–based Youth Solidarity Summer (YSS), which trains young South Asian activists to work on social justice issues; the Chicago-based SAPAC (South Asian Progressive Action Collective); and the New York City–based SAALT (South Asian American Leaders of Tomorrow), "dedicated to ensuring the full and equal participation by South Asians in the civic and political life of the United States."[21] It is to be hoped that such groups will introduce a spirit of friendship and public discussion into the lives of young Indian Americans.

Meanwhile the HSS, the U.S. arm of the RSS, has received a lot of anxious criticism in recent years, focused on communal violence in India. In competing to attract American members, the HSS has become aware of its problematic public image and apparently has decided to try to put itself above the fray. In a very interesting development, its leadership was assumed in 2002 by a noted human rights scholar, Ved Prakash Nanda. Nanda, born in the Punjab in 1934, studied law in Delhi before coming to Chicago for a master of laws at Northwestern University and a doctorate in law at Yale University.[22] He is currently Vice-Provost for Internationalization and a University Professor at the University of Denver School of Law. He has been president of the

World Jurist Association and the World Association of Law Professors. He has published widely on international law, in areas including criminal law, business law, and environmental law. He also works in aviation and space law, international human rights, and comparative law.[23] He recently served on the American Bar Association Task Force on Reforming the UN Commission on Human Rights.

Nanda is, then, an eminent and widely respected scholar. His views do not appear to be at all ideological. What he writes in the area of international law is thoughtful and balanced. His position in U.S. politics would seem to be that of a thoughtful liberal. Recently he has been very vocal in urging intervention in Darfur and has published a number of newspaper articles discussing the history of international law on genocide and crimes against humanity.[24]

Nanda is a person of high intellectual and ethical quality. He is personally warm, flexible, with a good sense of humor, and not at all interested in defending a rigid party line. He apparently agreed to assume the leading role in the HSS out of deep concern about the bad publicity surrounding it. Very likely the same reason led the HSS to seek him out: he is someone whose connection to the RSS/HSS is spiritual rather than political, and he cares about rescuing its spiritual values from the bad press it has received for its political connections. At the same time, as head of the organization he has to walk a delicate line. There are evident limits to what he can say in his official capacity.

Nanda has a history that might have led him to hate and fear Muslims. Like Gurcharan Das, he is a child of Partition, who had to flee his home during the violence. With the help of some Muslim friends, the family (which had lived in a Muslim area) was able to board a train to Jammu, and then walked three hundred miles, eventually arriving in Delhi. He tells me that he acquired no animosity to Muslims as a result of the experience. Although he was brought up as a Hindu during childhood, he was not particularly religious. Later he began going to the RSS *shakha* in Delhi. He regards the central values of the *shakhas* as cultural: Hindus need to understand their own past and its major texts.

One part of the Hindu tradition that Nanda admires is Gandhi's nonviolence, and he regards Gandhi's assassination as horrible. When I asked him whether in general he thinks it unfortunate that "some people connected with RSS would espouse violence," he replied, "I do, very strongly."[25]

Nanda views the RSS as a large organization with tremendous internal variety. Some people go to extremes that he repudiates: "There can be people who can be seen as going to an extreme . . . after looking back and saying for hundreds of years we have been under foreign rule and Muslims have been at times cruel rulers." Others are bad communicators; during our conversation he frequently mentioned "misunderstanding." He also stressed that there are people in the organization who were "very uncomfortable with the violence" in Gujarat. He himself strongly condemns that violence. When I asked whether leading figures in the RSS had publicly condemned the violence, at first he said they had, but when pressed he backed off, saying only that they did not condone it. When I mentioned the equivocal character of Vajpayee's Goa speech, he backed off even further, saying, "I think unfortunately you are right in that India and the Indian situation, from my perspective here, at times I can't really read it very well."

As for the U.S. situation, Nanda insisted, in a lecture at the University of Chicago in November 2005, that the HSS has officially condemned the Gujarat violence. When asked to supply dates and specific quotations, however, he responded that the organization does not keep good records. He is able to vouch only for his own statements: "For the record, after these tragic events in Gujarat, I frequently spoke out in private conversations and public gatherings denouncing the use of violence on the part of both Hindus and Muslims. HSS, too, has always deplored communal violence."[26] These statements are inadequate: they equate the roles of Hindus and Muslims, and they convict Muslims of perpetrating violence when there is no evidence that they did so. Similarly inadequate is Nanda's insistence that the tactics of people who attack American scholars of Hinduism have "perhaps been inarticulate and harsh."[27] After all, we are talking about death threats and physical violence. At the University of Chicago in November 2005, Nanda offered his personal apology privately to Paul Courtright for what Courtright had experienced at the hands of the Hindu right, and stated publicly that he had offered an apology. Throughout the meeting, at which he was the only representative of the Hindu right, he behaved with great civility and even warmth to those who disagree with him. One might say that he is simply playing a double game. It seems more likely, however, that he is a decent man who knows that there are limits he cannot transgress if he wants to continue to lead the

organization, and who continues to believe that the organization, at least in its U.S. incarnation, is on balance a force for good.

Recently, under Nanda's leadership, an HSS affiliate, the Hindu Education Foundation (HEF), has taken a leading role in seeking changes in California sixth-grade textbooks that teach the history of religions. All parties to this controversy agree that there were some inaccuracies that ought to be corrected. The HEF, however, also wants to suppress references to the caste system, to historical inequities in the treatment of women, and to migration of Hindus into India. In effect they seek the imposition of the problematic Hindu-right version of history. Opposed by the overwhelming majority of scholars in the United States who work on South Asian history, the group eventually lost on all these issues after some very divisive hearings.[28] On this issue, Nanda appears not to have exerted a moderating influence. He is correct in his claim that many Hindus in the United States are extremely sensitive to any portrayals of their religion that they consider derogatory—given the history of denigration of Hindu polytheism as barbaric and as basically equivalent to untouchability and *sati*—and in his assertion that voices from the community must be listened to respectfully.[29] Serious listening, however, should not lead to any compromise in the presentation of historical truth, as best we know it.

In the end, Nanda's position involves a certain amount of wishful thinking. He loves the spiritual and cultural values of the organization, and he wants it to be the best it can be. He is satisfied that in the United States these good aspects are predominating. But when a problem arises, he does tend to see the world through rose-tinted glasses—believing Vinod Prakash's account of the IDRF on the basis of incomplete evidence, and believing that what is happening in India is a result of miscommunication rather than bad ideology. "I think RSS have been such poor communicators . . . Because I know them and I know what is in them, their ideology. You are absolutely right that their ideology is seen by people who are very thoughtful and understand nuances, and they feel that their ideology is full of hate and Muslims and Christians are not welcome. And the point is that they can't articulate and present their viewpoint in a way that people would understand them. I feel sad about that."

Nanda refers frequently to difficulties in the Hindu Indian "psyche," based on a long history of subordination and "a kind of inferiority complex and not having your own identity and then finally saying that we have got to stand up to it. So that is where the difficulty comes." And it seems to be his more considered, more nuanced, view that the failure of the RSS to put forward the spiritual values that Nanda himself embraces is attributable to this kind of psychological wound, which leads to violent wishes. "You can't say that everyone who sees them and feels their hatred are all wrong and the RSS is totally right. But at the same time I have known them having seen what they profess, and not being able to articulate it and project it is the sad part. And that's why I feel that there are some remnants in the psyche that I talked about."

Whatever the complications of his views about the RSS, Nanda seems to be providing strong and positive leadership for the HSS in America. He emphasizes the importance of the values of interreligious cooperation, nonviolence, and sex equality as key parts of what is taught in the U.S. *shakhas*. He himself travels a lot, giving many speeches to local organizations. He speaks often to Muslim groups also, although he acknowledges with regret that there are no organized interfaith activities including Muslims.

The Hindu right is comparable to the U.S. South, torn between explicit appeals to racism and a more inclusive politics. First, a time comes when politicians begin to realize that an open appeal to hatred and division is not acceptable. (Vajpayee and Advani seem to have reached this moment.) Next, we would expect that over time a "New South" would come into being—that is, politicians who really do not believe in sectarian animosity would gradually take the place of those who conceal their animosity behind code words. There are no clear examples of this next generation among BJP leaders in India. In the United States, however, Nanda (albeit not a young man) is an example of what this "next generation" of Sangh Parivar public figures might be. He obviously has difficulty dealing with the ambiguous statements and the questionable behavior of the older generation, but his own direction is clear. The evident tension between his personal commitments and his official role suggests, however, that the future of the HSS, clearly the most important Hindu diaspora organization, is far from clear and that its internal politics are complex.

Swaminarayan Hinduism

In Bartlett, Illinois, my research assistants Shaheen/Meenakshi and Emily and I tour a temple carved in Gujarat and shipped in countless containers to Chicago, its ceiling glowing with light supplied by fiber-optic cables. We are in the heart of one of the most powerful subcommunities in the diaspora, the Swaminarayan sect of Hinduism, which organizes the local Gujarati community.

The Swaminarayan sect arose from the achievements of a distinguished Hindu holy man, Sahajanand Swami (1781–1830), who was born near Ayodhya but spent most of his life in Gujarat. In religious terms, the sect is a part of the *vaishnava* wing of the *bhakti* movement, a devotional type of Hinduism focused on spirituality rather than on ritual practice. Its two main subdivisions focus on Vishnu and on Shiva; the *vaishnava* movement focuses on Vishnu. Mahatma Gandhi was from a Gujarati *vaishnava* family, and the Swaminarayan movement shares many of Gandhi's ideals, in particular his emphasis on nonviolence.

Although his version of Hinduism was devotional and emphasized spirituality, Sahajanand Swami was also a dedicated social reformer. A leading scholar of the movement describes him as "the last of the medieval Hindu saints and the first of the neo-Hindu reformers."[30] He was very strongly opposed to repressive practices connected with women. Together with British governor John Malcolm, he led a crusade against female infanticide, which was widespread among the upper castes. (By one early nineteenth-century estimate, 20,000 infant girls were killed every year in two regions of Gujarat. The sex ratio among the upper castes was wildly skewed, with about one female to five males in these two districts.)[31] Sahajanand traveled widely preaching against this custom. He taught that infanticide was forbidden because it involved three moral wrongs: murder of a member of one's family, child murder, and murder of a woman, who deserved protection. He even offered money to help families pay dowry expenses. (Female infanticide was banned by law in 1870.) Sahajanand also worked to improve the social standing of widows, to discourage the practice of widow self-immolation, and to foster female education.

On caste issues, Sahajanand was also progressive; though not entirely rejecting the caste system, he did much to undermine its rigidity and strictness. Although his first successor was a Brahmin like himself, the next was a lower-caste layperson. Men from non-Brahmin castes began to be initiated as *sadhus* (priests), and today people from many castes belong to the sect, both as followers and as *sadhus*. According to a current member of the sect, "people at the temple are unconcerned with anyone's caste background . . . Even in our youth group meetings we are taught that caste-discrimination is bad."[32] In Gujarat, where Hinduism as a whole remains deeply caste-riven, the sect—at least in its BAPS (Bochasanwasi Shree Akshar Puroshottam) version—provides a marked contrast.

Sahajanand's progressivism, however, did not challenge the traditional view that men should have the controlling role in religion. His views about the separation of the sexes during ritual were much more conservative than those of more traditional Hindus.

During his lifetime Sahajanand was already seen as an incarnation of God, and his message of religious devotion attracted a large following. Swaminarayan priests or *sadhus* lead a celibate and otherwise ascetic life. Among other things, they are not allowed to touch money or to look a woman straight in the eye or stand close to one. (This is the reason given for keeping women at quite a distance from the sacred images during worship, even in the United States.) Lay followers must take five vows: to espouse nonviolence; to avoid intoxicating drink or drugs (including tobacco); to avoid adultery; to practice honesty and truth-telling (in business affairs, for example); and not to eat or drink anything served by a person from a defiling caste. This last prohibition has now been softened, both in India and in the United States, to a requirement that followers not defile themselves or others. In U.S. temples today, traditional Hindu rules regarding food and even marriage have also been abandoned.

The sect has grown, along the way producing some internal splits. (The BAPS segment is by far the largest of the three existing subdivisions.) It now has temples all over the world. In India the movement is concentrated in Gujarat; other strong areas include London, East Africa, and the United States. The Chicago temple, which opened in 2004, occupies thirty acres; its elaborately carved Italian marble and

Turkish limestone (worked in India and shipped to the United States) must have cost millions. The wealth of the community supporting the sect is conspicuous, both here and in other larger temples, for example in Edison, New Jersey, New York City, and Houston.

Yet this devotional sect, known for its asceticism, reforming tendencies, and emphasis on nonviolence, is today widely suspected of having some connection with the violence in Gujarat. Over the years, in part because of the important role of the Patel clan in both temple and politics, there has come to be at least a perception of a close link between the Swaminarayan sect and right-wing Gujarati politics. Given the complexity of Gujarati civil society, it is difficult to assess the validity of this perception. Certainly, the sect is admired and praised by state politicians of all stripes, at both national and state levels. It is therefore not surprising that the BJP, Gujarat's leading party, would also praise it. On account of the sect's statements discouraging conversion (its leader, the current Pramukh Swami, urges people from all religions to become better in their own religion, not to convert), it has become associated in the public mind with opposition to Islam and Christianity, the two proselytizing religions in the area.[33] There is nothing sinister about the remarks themselves, however; they seem to be directed against coerced or insincere conversion. The public perception that links Pramukh Swami with communal tensions has a flimsy basis. On the other hand, the high visibility of leading BJP politicians' connections with the sect—both L. K. Advani and Narendra Modi appear as prominent guests at the sect's public events, and members of the group play a prominent role in BJP fundraising—continues to arouse concern among people eager to stop communal violence.[34] Swaminarayan *sadhus* say that they are a purely religious organization and have no political views: the only link with BJP politicians is that "we are Hindus and they are Hindus, so we are linked together."[35] Politicians come to the festivals because they want Pramukh Swami's blessing. Interviewed in 1999 by scholar Raymond Brady Williams, Pramukh Swami stated: "We don't have any political ties with them but only relations with respect to religion and spirituality."[36]

The government seeks the goodwill of the sect; but the sect must also retain the goodwill of the government, to get building permits, obtain land, and so forth. The sect has conspicuously avoided making

any statements about Gujarat that would implicate the party in power. Pramukh Swami has publicly condemned the violence and urged peace and reconciliation. Devotees were urged to aid anyone in distress; prayers for all the victims were offered; an interfaith memorial ceremony was held, including Muslim and Christian leaders, on the premises of the temple complex in Gandhinagar, the capital of Gujarat. Celebration of an important festival was canceled in order to offer prayers for the victims at 9,000 BAPS centers around the world. Pramukh Swami met with local political and social leaders to discuss how to avoid future violence.[37] Nonetheless, the sect did not condemn the actions of police and government. Its evenhanded deploring of the plight of "victims" is all too evenhanded. Many small and relatively powerless NGOs also remained publicly neutral. The admirable Self-Employed Women's Organization incurred widespread criticism for its failure to denounce Modi and for its leadership's continued willingness to work with him. This choice, however, can be explained by the extreme vulnerability of the organization and its members, who would be at risk of violence had their leadership condemned the violence. It is not clear that the neutrality of BAPS can be similarly justified, given its enormous wealth and social influence.

In the United States, the link between the Swaminarayan movement and the Hindu right is even less clear. The Hindu Students Council helped to organize an international gathering of two thousand students from fifty countries in July 2003, the "Global Dharma Conference," with support from the VHP; this meeting was hosted by the large Swaminarayan temple in Edison, New Jersey, and Pramukh Swami gave the closing address via a satellite link. The RSS supported the event, but so, too, did many other organizations, including Jain, Buddhist, Sikh, and Native American organizations[38] (though not Muslim or Christian organizations). The event was pluralistic up to a point, and focused on ethical values. Nonetheless, the close linkage between the HSC and the VHPA has made many people construe the event as indirectly exclusionary.

On balance, it seems likely that the Swaminarayan sect is a rather passive force for peace, and that the Gujaratis who are both affiliates of the sect and supporters of Narendra Modi derive the values of communal division that animate Gujarati civil society from another source, not

from any malign teaching by the sect. The sect's practices of isolating (and implicitly denigrating) women are certainly unhelpful in the context of both the U.S. and the Indian democracies, and its emphasis on absolute obedience to the words of Pramukh Swami surely reinforces the devaluation of critical and independent thinking that is all too prominent in Gujarat. Other, closer connections to the Hindu right are widely suspected but difficult to find.

We went to Bartlett hoping to find some answers to these questions, but we discovered little. The temple seems to be managed by a large number of young men brought in from Gujarat, who describe themselves as volunteers. We got no sense of how they make their living; perhaps the temple gives them room and board in exchange for their work. Our guide's rigid, unmotivated smile troubled us, suggesting a kind of cultic obedience that Americans typically associate with authority and the abnegation of critical independence. He told us a lot about nonviolence and the unity of all religions, and he showed us displays of major events in Indian history, which replicated the orthodox Hindu-right line in every detail (the Indus Valley civilization was Hindu, there was no migration from outside, and so forth). It is an old maxim of textual criticism that agreement in truth does not show a common origin, but agreement in error does. An interesting variant on orthodoxy, however, was the prominent place given, on the wall picturing great Hindu artists, to the Sufi Muslim poet Kabir and the Rajput queen Mirabai, who left her husband and home to sing holy songs. We liked the creative books for little children that taught the Gujarati language and told engaging versions of the leading texts of Indian literature (including not only the canonical epics, but Sanskrit drama as well). Shaheen/Meenakshi even thought of buying them, since she learned to speak Gujarati from her grandmother but cannot read or write it. No ideology of hate seems to be circulating via those books, at any rate. Nor did we ever hear any anti-Muslim remarks.

Our guide tried hard to paint a positive picture of the sect's views and treatment of women, telling us that their relegation to the back of the temple was a mark of the great respect the *sadhus* have for them. He himself treated us quite respectfully, though cautiously once he knew that "Meenakshi" spoke Gujarati and that I (dressed in a cotton *salwaar* bought in Ahmedabad) had done women's development work

in Gujarat. When we discussed matters of communal conflict, however, the guide, so eloquent about fiber-optic cables, clammed up completely. (Part of the time he was being supervised by an older man, who spoke Gujarati but seemed to speak no English, and followed both him and us around the temple.) He told us that he had still been in Gujarat in 2002, so I observed that living through so much communal tension must have been difficult. He responded that the common people get along fine; it is just politicians who exploit these issues for their own gain—exactly the line espoused by the Bollywood movie *Dev.* "Would you, then," I asked, "say, that Narendra Modi was partly responsible for what happened?" At this point his face took on a genuine expression, one of embarrassment, and he said quickly, "I don't know about these things." (It was shortly after this that the older man began to follow us around, as if the guide had summoned him through some other fancy technology.) Later, when we were discussing activities for families, I asked whether they had joint activities with the HSS. "HSS?" he said, as if he didn't understand the word. I told him that the HSS has a *shakha* close by, in Villa Park, which meets every week. (I had learned this from scholar Shridhar Damle, who lives there.) Did they team up to do joint activities? Our young man simply pretended utter confusion at this point, as if he had never heard of the HSS.

The sect must know of the nearby presence of an active chapter of the HSS. Moreover, there is nothing sinister about having a connection with the HSS or about jointly organizing activities for families and children. The local Gujarati community is likely to be involved in both groups. So why was our guide so eager to pretend he knew nothing about it? Clearly, the sect wants to avoid being enmeshed in political controversy or fielding questions about its political role.

Historically, the HSS has a more troubling set of ideological commitments than the Swaminarayan sect. Today it is possible that a reversal is under way. The HSS is at least under leadership that appears to be moving the organization toward self-criticism and change. In contrast, the values of obedience that animate the Swaminarayan sect militate against critical self-examination. Although its values of peace and harmony are admirable, the Gujarati subcommunity that it serves is in particular need of critical thinking, even in its U.S. incarnation (which issued the invitation to Narendra Modi). The Swaminarayan sect's tre-

mendous wealth and burgeoning influence suggest that it could play a more active and positive role than it has as yet in promoting interfaith respect and the condemnation of politicians who do not exemplify its own highest values.

The U.S. diaspora community is and will remain an important part of Indian politics. Its wealth, high educational and scientific achievements, and close attachment to India all make it an important source of both resources and emotional energy. This community has the potential for great good, particularly in the areas of poverty and disaster relief. It also has the potential for harm, if it is not sufficiently attentive to the sources of violence in Indian politics and civil society. People of goodwill can end up supporting things that they do not know they are supporting. Attitudes that may or may not lie at the heart of RSS values and traditions may get reinforcement from people who would very likely repudiate those attitudes if they were laid out clearly. Young people who want a way of connecting to their roots when they go off to college may end up unwittingly supporting a highly politicized organization that does a lot to undermine communal harmony and engages in questionable tactics against scholars whose ideas leaders do not like.

The diaspora community has one huge problem: the lack of an institutional structure for minority-national consciousness that is not, at the same time, a sectarian religious structure. As long as the prominent civil society organization are Hindu or Muslim, community consciousness will remain polarized, and perhaps even more polarized than in India, where people see different groups every day and cannot help having the idea that their country is pluralistic and diverse. If an HSS *shakha* or a Swaminarayan temple is the only India you know, your sense of India will be a narrow one in consequence.

The problem of communalization is probably not going to abate, given the preponderant influence of Gujaratis, both economically and numerically, in the diaspora community. To invite Narendra Modi to address a major convention is to issue a challenge to U.S. pluralism—which the U.S. State Department answered in the correct way. The episode suggests that the Gujarati community has insulated itself too much from critical thinking and democratic openness.

Such difficulties within the diaspora community can be addressed only by creative and active leadership, leadership that is willing to take an unequivocal stand on issues such as the abuse of power and the breakdown of the rule of law in Gujarat and the abuse of the Internet in threats against scholars. Consuls-general can do more than most have done, as the activities of Surendra Kumar show, but leaders of existing organizations also need to do more to foster genuinely pluralistic interfaith activities and a spirit of internal criticism. This should clearly be Nanda's next step, and it is to be hoped that his members will support him in taking that step.

More could also be done by the Indian government itself as the nation moves toward closer relations with the United States in the aftermath of Manmohan Singh's highly successful visit to this country in June 2005. Indian-U.S. relations currently focus on science and technology and on the nuclear issue. A much deeper set of ties could be fostered, including concerted action against religious violence and prejudice in all its forms. When I talked with Sonia Gandhi in June 2004, she expressed eagerness about fostering outreach programs in the United States that would bring news of the Gujarat violence, and communal tensions generally, to a diverse U.S. audience. Basically, she was hoping that I would jump-start such a movement, either through the university or through our consulate.[39] Surely the government of India itself has a role to play here even at a distance, through its selection of consuls-general, its instructions to them, and its own outreach efforts. If the government can establish links with leaders of the U.S. community who care about such issues, perhaps Surendra Kumar's Indian-American Friendship Association can be restarted, this time on a national scale, as a forum for public debate, intellectual exchange, and social mingling.

The same issues that are central in thinking about education in India are central when we think about the children of the diaspora: critical thinking, knowledge of the world, and the imagination of otherness. These capacities do not grow automatically, and they have enemies: dogmatism, fanaticism, ignorance, false ideology, and emotional obtuseness. The future of the U.S. community will be determined by the outcome of the struggle between these two sets of forces. As Ved Nanda says, there are those "remnants in the psyche" that sometimes prevent people from living up to the best in themselves.

10 The Clash Within

I have tried to save children from the vicious methods which alienate their minds, and from other prejudices which are fostered through histories, geographies and lessons full of national prejudices. In the East there is a great deal of bitterness against other races, and in our own homes we are often brought up with feelings of hatred. I have tried to save the children from such feelings . . . It will be a great future, when base passions are no longer stimulated within us, when human races come closer to one another, and when through their meeting new truths are revealed.

Rabindranath Tagore, *"To Teachers"*

What subverts democracy, and what preserves it?

In May 2004 Indians went to the polls in large numbers and repudiated the politics of Hindu homogeneity. Many issues played a role in the electoral defeat of the BJP; its cynical proclamation that "India" was "Shining," while the lives of the rural poor remained untouched, was one major cause of the revolt. In some regions, though, the aftermath of Gujarat was clearly a major factor. The BJP went down to defeat in Gujarat itself, and the most conspicuously RSS-linked of the government's ministers, Education Minister Murli Manohar Joshi, lost his seat in Uttar Pradesh.

Even if the central issue behind the defeat was economic, rejection of the politics of religious division also played a strong role. Under Sonia Gandhi's leadership, Congress campaigned strongly on the issue of pluralism, and the issue clearly resonated with voters. Both the politics of "India Shining" and the attitudes that generated the Gujarat rioting reflected a staggering lack of sympathy with human suffering and

an equal failure to respect human dignity. These deep and pervasive failures are what the poor of India overwhelmingly voted against.

This book began as a story of grave peril when a quasi-fascist takeover of India's government seemed possible, and at times even imminent. But India's institutions and people have proven more resilient and independent than many pessimistic observers predicted. What lessons can we learn from this story that might help us understand better not only India, but the future of democracy in this violent and conflict-ridden world?

Many factors have contributed to India's resilience. One is surely the shrewd institutional structure created by its founders, with its separation of powers, its independent judiciary, and its federalism. Despite the constitutional difficulties encountered in areas such as affirmative action and religious personal laws, the system is both hardy and resilient, with great resources for self-correction.

Another factor is the remarkable integrity and selflessness of many of India's major leaders before and since independence. The nation has been far more fortunate than Pakistan in the caliber of the people it has elevated to power, and also very shrewd in its choices. The proverbial independence of mind of India's common people is not limitless; Indira Gandhi was the object of an enthusiastic mass following even while she was violating civil liberties. But temporary bad judgment has had a way of correcting itself in the nick of time, as in the election after the Emergency, when Indira Gandhi's restrictions on civil rights led to her resounding electoral defeat. The same wisdom corrected the nation's course in May 2004.

A crucial factor is India's famous love of talk and argument, in particular its long traditions of public debate and of a high-quality free press. Even at the worst of times after the Gujarat riots, the national media were both free and outspoken as scholars, activists, journalists, and students expressed their views in an explosion of argument that was in some ways as heartening as the violence was appalling. What the Hindu right has typically wanted most is subservience of mind and uniformity of ideology, an orthodox picture of history, a single view of national identity parroted by all. If its leaders thought they could get that in India, they were mistaken. Though stuffed full of propaganda like Tagore's parrot, the Indian public did not acquiesce. It argued back.

Even the furious debates over textbooks are a cheering sign of involvement and passionate reasoning, on both sides. When, as often, Indians say that the BJP cannot ultimately win because "India is just not like that," the tradition of public argument is one of the things they mean.

But they also mean something more. We do see a "clash of civilizations" in India. It is not the one depicted by Samuel Huntington, between a democratic West and an antidemocratic Islam. It is instead a struggle between two "civilizations" in the nation itself. One civilization delights in its diversity and has no fear of people who come from different backgrounds; the other feels safe only when homogeneity reigns and the different are at the margins. One sees the unity of the nation as consisting in moral and political principles affirmed by people who differ by religion, region, and ethnicity; the other sees unity as consisting in the soil of the motherland and in the majority's undivided allegiance to a single religious/ethnic culture. One sees richness in inclusiveness; the other finds inclusiveness messy, unmanly, and humiliating. When people say, "India is just not like that," they mean that the inclusive, curious, argumentative, slightly chaotic India they know could never put up for long with the herdlike conformity imposed by a monolithic ideology of hatred, intolerance, and violence. They mean, too, that the very traditions of Hinduism, with its plethora of gods and rituals, its regional variety, its tolerance, its color and sensuousness, strongly militate against the imposition of an aggressive, quasi-fascist culture imported from 1930s Europe to fill a perceived void in the Indian psyche. Such a culture just cannot gain a lasting foothold in India. Or so the people belonging to the first "civilization" believe. The recent election supports their contention.

The "clash of civilizations" exists in every modern democracy. All contain individuals and groups that hate people who look different, who want to blame the nation's problems on "outsiders," who seek a constructed homogeneity as the source of a nation's strength. Most also have elements that conceive of the nation's unity as ethical and political, and as embracing all its diverse inhabitants. Perhaps India and the United States are especially alike in having such an evident history of diversity and inclusiveness that the politics of hatred has an uphill battle to wage. When Pat Buchanan tried to march in the Chicago St. Patrick's Day procession on an anti-immigrant platform, he was booed

and jeered, because the marchers knew well that America is an immigrant nation. India is not a nation with large numbers of immigrants (at least not for many centuries), but it is a nation of astonishing diversity, and this diversity is lodged at the heart of the majority religion itself.

Gandhi understood something important about political struggle: that it is always, in the last instance, a struggle within the self, as the violent and dominating parts contend against the parts that are willing to live with human powerlessness and incompleteness. From its beginnings in the time of Tagore until now, the power of the Hindu right has been a power based upon fear, shame, and humiliation, playing to the psychology of people who seek a nationhood that is masculine and aggressive to compensate for the deep wounds of empire. The power of the Gandhi-Nehru vision of the nation, by contrast; is a power based on compassion and respect. This power, as Gandhi shrewdly saw, derives from putting aside a certain aspiration to dominant masculinity and the control that goes with it. It derives from accepting a position of quasi-naked helplessness, and finding moral strength inside that position. If we amend Gandhi's too-ascetic vision in light of the insights of Tagore, who insisted on finding strength and joy in the body's complexity and desire, we do change Gandhi's ethical ideal, but we need not reject his insight that a "conflict of civilizations" is in the last instance always internal, an attempt to deal with the shame and fear of being human.

The ideas of the Hindu right appeal, then, insofar as they do, because people need a unitary something to cling onto, a something that promises to heal the deep wounds of humiliation that so many Indians feel and fantasize. (For surely, if some of the wounds are actual, a large proportion are also fantasy, as a powerful majority feels itself robbed of its identity and power by a powerless minority.) The fantasy that one has been humiliated, and the fear and hatred of the other that are the concomitants of this fantasy, are the real culprits in Gujarat—that "remnant in the psyche" that Ved Nanda talked about so eloquently, which, in his (insider) view, prevents the Hindu right from consistently espousing a noble set of ideals.

We see the psychological origins of violence most clearly, perhaps, in the preoccupation of the Hindu right with purity and respectability, a preoccupation that involves them in a repudiation of sensuousness and

sexual vulnerability. The idea that a real man must be made of iron rather than flesh is hardly new to the world, and here, as elsewhere, the idea is linked to a passionate desire to extinguish the softness in oneself that is perceived as the source of humiliation.

India is not hospitable soil for the idea that a real man is made of metal. Ganesha never had a "six-pack" of muscles around his abdomen until around 1990; before and after that, he had a soft, round belly, and he danced with no shame. In general, the lives of the gods are characterized by a degree of acceptance of bodily receptivity and human vulnerability very unusual in the history of the world. Indians simply do not have, or more rarely have, the rage for control and for obliteration of the receptive and the feminine that surface so often in the history of fascist movements. The teeming and beautiful chaos of an Indian city is simply not like what any fascist has ever sought or tolerated. Walt Whitman wrote of the United States:

> These States are the amplest poem,
> Here is not merely a nation but a teeming Nation of nations,
> . . .
> Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality, diversity, the soul loves.[1]

India is like that, only more so.

The ability to accept difference—difference of religion, of ethnicity, of race, of sexuality—requires, first, the ability to accept something about oneself: that one is not lord of the world, that one is both adult and child, that no all-embracing collectivity will keep one safe from the vicissitudes of life, that others outside oneself have reality. This ability requires, in turn, the cultivation of a moral imagination that sees reality in other human beings, that does not see other human beings as mere instruments of one's own power or threats to that power. In effect, we are talking about the defeat of infantile narcissism. Of course India, like every other nation, contains many examples of narcissism. But there is something in the traditions that hold it all together that cultivates the moral imagination, that informs people that otherness is intriguing, colorful, fun, sexy—not just scary.

These abilities do not exist without deliberate cultivation. We all have tendencies that can lead to narcissism and the domination of others, and we all have tendencies that can lead to compassion and the acceptance of others' reality. Young children are all narcissists, and it is only through struggle that we come to see the reality of someone else's suffering or to acknowledge the vulnerability in oneself that makes one an equal of the sufferer. India has long had poets, leaders, and religious thinkers who summoned the moral imagination to be the best that it can be. In their different ways, Nehru, Gandhi, and Tagore all built on past traditions and helped to create the preconditions for a stable democracy.

A new generation of technically adept and well-off Indians, raised on rote learning, may come to lack the identification with the poor and the different that was the great strength of the politics of independence. More generally, poetry is going out of fashion, and fiber-optic cables are coming in. This trend, if not countered by aggressive educational reforms focused on pedagogy and the arts, spells big dangers for the future. India needs Tagore today even more than it needs Nehru and Gandhi. As Whitman said, their politicians "shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall."[2] A nation whose unity is based not on blood, soil, and religion but instead on a shared political and ethical culture needs poets all the more, as Whitman knew: for only a shared public poetry can give flesh and life to the bare bones of constitutional ideas, when people have decided to eschew the colorful symbols of religious or ethnic belonging as the source of their common life.

In the end, Gujarat shows us that the world is both more complicated and simpler than people think when they talk in terms of a "clash of civilizations." The forces involved are multiple, complex. The threatening ideas of the Hindu right are in large part Western, meaning European romantic ideas of nationalism and unity (though Europe, like India, contains other ideas of the nation). The traditions of both Hinduism and Islam in India are multifaceted, diverse, and impossible to reduce to simple polarities, if one cares about evidence and argument.

The world is also simpler than the "clash of civilizations" thinkers acknowledge, in the sense that human beings are not so very different from one place to another, and the roots of violence in the world are

depressingly familiar to anyone who undertakes serious introspection. Indeed, the portrayal of evil as "over there" and "other" is not just a failure to acknowledge the problems of human frailty, shame, and need that underlie the rise of the Hindu right; it is a version of that problem. Americans are engaging in narcissistic self-comforting when they accept such a thesis. The roots of what happened in Gujarat lie in every mind and heart, because human life is very difficult and our psyches, wounded by mortality and finitude, seek to heal that wound by discreditable means.

We are talking here of tendencies. Culture can make a huge difference in activating some tendencies and undermining others. India's traditions on the whole, and certainly its Hindu traditions, conduce to acceptance of otherness and undermine the fascist need for homogeneity. In explaining the resilience of India's democracy, therefore, a thesis about cultural differences plays a significant role. Any such thesis must be combined with a keen and multifaceted sense of historical experiences. Thus "German culture" does not explain the rise of fascism without an account of the devastating humiliation of the First World War; similarly, the rise of the Hindu right must be understood in conjunction with colonial humiliation and domination. We must look for cultural explanations in this pluralistic, many-sided way, seeing each culture as an internal plurality, interacting in turn with complex historical events and, at all times, with the general shape of human existence, which makes it very difficult to be good.

Jawaharlal Nehru loved poetry and was himself a poet of the nation, creating a narrative of its unity, in *The Discovery of India,* that remains a fine guide for the future, as it looks for itself in the past. He had deep psychological understanding when he spoke about himself and his loved ones. Why did he not focus more on the creation of a Tagorean public culture in which the imagination of difference would be robustly nourished in each new generation? In part, he may have thought that the arts were aspects of his own elitism. (Gandhi's skepticism about the arts might have encouraged him in this direction.) In part, he may simply have thought that material need had to be met first, and the "higher things" would come later. (This is a common error of Marxist thinking, and one that he may have absorbed from his youthful leftist education.) In part, he may have thought that any "public poetry" that would move large numbers of people would have to be religious, and he had a deep distrust of religion. In part, he may simply have lacked the power to disseminate an educational and spiritual vision broadly within the diverse nation.

Whatever the reason for his failure to follow the path sketched out by Tagore and Gandhi, Nehru left crucial aspects of public education and public culture insufficiently supported, and they are even more fragile today; the new technological elites have far less of the poetry that came naturally to the founders. Political leaders, both in India and in the Hindu community in the United States, neglect these matters at democracy's peril.

What subverts democracy, and what preserves it? In any democracy, the moral imagination is always in peril. Necessary and delicate, it can so easily be hijacked by fear, shame, and outraged masculinity. The real "clash of civilizations" is not "out there," between admirable Westerners and Muslim zealots. It is here, within each person, as we oscillate uneasily between self-protective aggression and the ability to live in the world with others.

Chronology

1861	Birth of Rabindranath Tagore (May 7)
1869	Birth of Mohandas K. Gandhi (October 2)
1872	Birth of Kasturba, later Gandhi's wife
1876	Birth of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, father of Pakistan (December 25)
1878	Tagore visits England for the first time
1883	Gandhi marries Kasturba; birth of V. D. Savarkar, future Hindu nationalist leader
1884	Tagore marries Mrinalini; his sister-in-law Kadambari Devi commits suicide
1885	Death of Gandhi's father; Indian National Congress founded to provide a forum for the articulation of Indian opinion about governance
1887	Gandhi goes to England, studies law at Inner Temple in London
1888	Birth of Maulana Azad, Muslim scholar and Indian nationalist leader, promoter of Hindu-Muslim unity, and Congress president in 1923 and 1940–1946
1889	Birth of Jawaharlal Nehru (November 14); birth of K. B. Hedgewar, founder of the RSS
1891	Birth of B. R. Ambedkar, "untouchable" and leading framer of India's Constitution
1892	Jinnah goes to England to study
1893	Gandhi goes to South Africa to practice law
1896	Gandhi returns to India and takes his family back with him to South Africa
1899	Gandhi organizes Indian Ambulance Corps for British in Boer War; birth of Kamala Kaul, later Nehru's wife
1901	Tagore founds school at Santiniketan; Gandhi returns to India, attends Indian National Congress meetings

1902 Death of Mrinalini, Tagore's wife; Gandhi returns to South Africa
1904 Gandhi starts Phoenix Farm, an ideal community modeled on Ruskin's ideas, near Durban, South Africa
1905 *Swadeshi* (boycott of foreign goods) movement in Bengal; Tagore initially sympathetic, later more critical; death of Tagore's father; Jawaharlal Nehru goes to England to begin education at Harrow, stays in England until 1914
1906 Gandhi takes vow of *brahmacharya,* abstinence from sexual relations; Muslim League founded in India; birth of M. S. Golwalkar, future RSS leader
1907 Jawaharlal Nehru goes to Trinity College, Cambridge
1909 Gandhi publishes *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Self-Rule)
1910 Tagore publishes *Gora* and *The Institution of Fixed Beliefs;* Gandhi founds second ideal community in South Africa, Tolstoy Farm; Jawaharlal Nehru studies law in London
1912 Nehru returns to India, begins law practice with father; B. R. Ambedkar goes to the United States to study at Columbia University, where he gets a Ph.D.
1913 Tagore wins Nobel Prize for Literature; Gandhi leads mass nonviolent protest against racial discrimination in South Africa; Jinnah joins Muslim League
1914 Tagore publishes "Letter from a Wife" and "Haimanti"
1915 Tagore publishes *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World); Gandhi returns to India, establishes Satyagraha Ashram near Ahmedabad, Gujarat; admits an untouchable family
1916 Marriage of Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamala Kaul
1917 Birth of Indira, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru and Kamala
1918 Gandhi leads strike of millworkers in Ahmedabad
1919 Rowlatt Act suspends civil liberties in India; Gandhi organizes day of nonviolent protest against it; General Dyer and the British army massacre Indian civilians at Amritsar (April 13); Tagore returns his knighthood; Motilal Nehru named chair of an investigative commission relating to the massacre; Jawaharlal Nehru goes to Amritsar to investigate; Congress is unified under Gandhi's leadership; first nonviolent noncooperation campaign launched
1921 Jawaharlal Nehru's first imprisonment (along with his father)
1923 Savarkar publishes *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*

1924 Birth of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, future prime minister
1925 Gandhi's *Autobiography* published in Gujarati, in serial form; founding of the RSS under Hedgewar's leadership
1926 Nehru and Kamala in Europe for tuberculosis treatment for her
1927 Ambedkar leads march to establish rights of untouchables
1928 Jinnah breaks with Nehru and Congress
1929 Birth of Lal Krishna Advani, future BJP leader
1930 Gandhi leads Great Salt March to protest British tax on salt; Tagore delivers the Hibbert Lectures at Oxford, which become *The Religion of Man*
1931 Death of Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal's father
1932 Gandhi fasts in prison
1934 Indira Nehru attends school in Santiniketan
1936 Tagore lectures on women's independence and equality; Nehru publishes *Autobiography;* Kamala dies of tuberculosis at age thirty-six
1939 Golwalkar publishes *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*
1940 Jinnah and Muslim League make first demand for "Pakistan"; death of K. B. Hedgewar
1941 Death of Rabindranath Tagore (August 7)
1942 Congress, led by Nehru and Gandhi, passes "Quit India" resolution; Indira Nehru marries Feroze Gandhi, a Parsi, Congress Party volunteer and aide to Kamala Nehru.
1944 Nehru writes *The Discovery of India* between April and September, in prison; death of Gandhi's wife Kasturba while in British detention; birth of Rajiv Gandhi, elder son of Indira (Nehru) Gandhi and Feroze Gandhi
1946 Mass violence erupts between Hindus and Muslims; discussions of partition of India and Pakistan continue; Gandhi walks 116 miles in Bengal to stop religious strife; birth of Sanjay Gandhi, younger son of Indira (Nehru) Gandhi and Feroze Gandhi; birth of Sonia Maino, the future wife of Rajiv Gandhi, near Turin, Italy
1947 Indian independence officially begins at midnight, August 14–15; Nehru makes "tryst with destiny" speech; Pakistan begins life as a separate nation at the same time, with Jinnah as its leader; massive violence accompanies partition of India and Pakistan; Gandhi fasts for Hindu-Muslim unity in Calcutta

1948	Gandhi is assassinated (January 30); Mohammed Ali Jinnah, leader of Muslim League and founder of Pakistan, dies in Karachi, after a long illness; the RSS is banned
1949	Nathuram Godse, Gandhi's assassin, sentenced to death on November 8, hanged November 15; the RSS wins legal status after negotiation with government
1950	Ratification of India's Constitution (January 26); birth of Narendra Modi
1951	Ambedkar resigns Law Ministry over concessions to traditionalists on sex equality
1954	Ambedkar converts to Buddhism
1956	Death of Ambedkar (December 6)
1960	India-China war
1964	Nehru dies (May 26); founding of the VHP as ally of the RSS
1965	War between India and Pakistan
1966	Indira Gandhi becomes prime minister; death of V. D. Savarkar; Golwalkar publishes *Bunch of Thoughts*
1968	Marriage of Sonia Maino and Rajiv Gandhi
1971	War between India and Pakistan
1973	Death of M. S. Golwalkar, RSS leader; Supreme Court articulates doctrine of the Constitution's "essential features" in *Keshavananda Bharati*
1975	Indira Gandhi declares state of emergency on June 26, suspending many civil liberties
1977	Mrs. Gandhi defeated in elections; Janata Party coalition takes power
1980	Founding of the BJP with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as leader; Indira Gandhi returns to power as prime minister; death of her son Sanjay in an airplane accident
1984	Assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31 by her Sikh bodyguard; anti-Sikh riots in Delhi; Hindu right revives issue of mosque at Ayodhya; founding of Bajrang Dal, militant youth wing of the VHP
1987–88	Broadcast of *Ramayana* on Indian television
1990	L. K. Advani mounts *rath yatra,* a mass campaign journey focused on the issue of Ayodhya
1991	The BJP is major opposition party; assassination of Rajiv Gandhi

1992	Ayodhya situation becomes tense; RSS Founders Day rally calls for demolition of Babri Mosque; mosque pulled down on December 6
1996	The BJP wins a plurality of seats; Vajpayee sworn in as prime minister but resigns after thirteen days; a coalition governs
1998	The BJP wins a plurality, forms a coalition (National Democratic Alliance) with caste-based and regional parties; Vajpayee becomes prime minister
1999	The BJP wins a plurality; National Democratic Alliance coalition governs
2001	Narendra Modi becomes chief minister of Gujarat
2002	February 27, train incident at Godhra; February–March, pogrom in Gujarat; Narendra Modi reelected chief minister of Gujarat in December
2004	BJP defeated in May elections; coalition led by Congress takes power with Manmohan Singh as prime minister
2005	L. K. Advani lays wreath on grave of Jinnah in Karachi, is briefly forced out of party leadership; Narendra Modi is denied a visa to visit the United States

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Bajrang Dal "Strong Group," militant youth wing of the VHP, started in 1984, responsible for a good deal of violence against Muslims and Christians; its website, HinduUnity.org, gives a good picture of its antiminority attitudes.

BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) "Indian People's Party" or "Mother-India People's Party," the political party founded out of, and still profoundly linked to, the RSS; it held power (in a coalition with smaller parties) from 1998 to 2004. The term ***bharat*** is a Hindu term for India, in the specific sense of a geographic entity; but the original term is now commonly modified by the addition of the epithet ***maataa***, "mother," to form ***Bharatmata*** or ***Bharat Mata***, "Mother India." So ***bharatiya*** means "Indian" in a sense that is freighted with emotional/patriotic overtones, whereas ***rashtriya*** means "national" in a more neutral sense; ***Hindustani*** would be "Indian" in an inclusive way that would be congenial to minorities; the BJP conspicuously did not select the name Hindustani Janata Party.

Hindutva "Hinduness," "the essence of being a Hindu," a term made prominent by Hindu-right writer V. D. Savarkar; it has come to denote the entire ideology of ethnic homogeneity and purity, often including the subordinate status of non-Hindu groups.

HSS (Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh) "Hindu Corps of Volunteers," the American branch of the Indian RSS, founded in the 1980s.

Kar sevak "Hand-server-for-a-cause," a volunteer working for the restoration of a Rama temple at Ayodhya.

Panchayats Elected rural village councils whose role was envisaged by Gandhi and which were finally established by the Seventy-third and Seventy-

fourth Amendments to the Constitution in 1992; one-third of the seats are reserved for women.

Ram Rajya The "Rule of Rama," an ideal imagined time of peace and unity under the rule of the Hindu god Rama, an idea invoked in very different ways by Gandhi and the Hindu right.

Rath yatra "Chariot journey," a term used in eastern India for the annual ritual journal of the Lord Jagannath, an incarnation of Krishna, in an enormous chariot drawn by ropes. In other parts of India the term would not have these specific religious associations, but it would allude to a victorious chariot journey, such as Rama may have embarked on after defeating Ravana. The BJP uses this term prominently to designate campaign-related pilgrimages undertaken by several BJP politicians at various times, most famously by L. K. Advani in connection with Ayodhya, with heavy symbolic/religious/militant overtones, and in a motor vehicle with painted chariotlike trappings.

RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) "National Corps of Volunteers," the militant social organization that is the heart of the Hindu right, founded in 1925.

Sangh Parivar "Family of Groups," the set of organizations comprising the Hindu right, including the RSS, VHP, BJP, and Bajrang Dal.

Satyagraha "Truth-force," Gandhi's theory and practice of nonviolent resistance.

Shakha "Branch," the name given to the boys' groups established all over India by the RSS.

Swaraj "Self-rule," a term for political independence, also used by Gandhi to refer to inner psychological self-rule.

VHP (Vishva Hindu Parishad) "All-Hindu Council" or "World Hindu Council," a social organization closely allied to the RSS and BJP, founded in 1964. A U.S. wing with the name VHPA was founded in 1970.

NOTES

The following sources are referred to in the Preface: Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); George Kennan, "Comments on the National Security Problem," in *Measures Short of War: The George F. Kennan Lectures at the National War College*, ed. Giles D. Harlow and George C. Maerz (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1990), 168 (I am grateful to Peter Beinart's "The Rehabilitation of the Cold-War Liberal," *New York Times Magazine*, April 30, 2006, 40–45, which quotes a smaller piece of this passage, for sending me to the source); Jawaharlal Nehru, speech on August 14–15, 1947; and, by Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), published in India by Women Unlimited; *Essays on Gender and Governance*, Martha Nussbaum, Amrita Basu, Yasmin Tambiah, and Niraja Gopal Jayal (New Delhi: United Nations Development Programme Resource Centre, 2003); "Religion, Culture, and Sex Equality," in *Men's Laws, Women's Lives*, ed. Indira Jaising (Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2005), 109–137 (Jaising is the founder of the Lawyers' Collective); "India, Sex Equality, and Constitutional Law," in *The Gender of Constitutional Jurisprudence*, ed. Beverley Baines and Ruth Rubio-Marin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 174–204; "India: Implementing Sex Equality through Law," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 2 (2001), 35–58; "Sex, Laws, and Inequality: What India Can Teach the United States," *Daedalus*, Winter 2002, 95–106; "Sex Equality, Liberty, and Privacy: A Comparative Approach to the Feminist Critique," in *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies*, ed. E. Sridharan, Z. Hasan, and R. Sudarshan (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 242–283, a shortened version published under the title "What's Privacy Got to Do with It?: A Comparative Approach to the Feminist Critique," in *Women and the United States Constitution: History, Interpretation, Practice*, ed. Sibyl A. Schwarzenbach and Patricia Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 153–175; "The Modesty of Mrs.

Bajaj: India's Problematic Route to Sexual Harassment Law," in *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law,* ed. Catharine A. MacKinnon and Reva B. Siegel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 633–671; "'On Equal Conditions': Constitutions as Protectors of the Vulnerable," in *Will Secular India Survive?* ed. Mushirul Hasan (Delhi: imprintOne, 2004), 22–49; "Women's Education: A Global Challenge," *Signs* 29 (2004), 633–701; "Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6 (2005), 167–183.

Introduction

1. "India's New Leader Vows Not to Tolerate Sectarian Riots," *New York Times,* May 21, 2004, A14.
2. One exception is the denial of a visa to Narendra Modi, described at the end of Chapter 1.
3. Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," *New York Review of Books,* June 26, 1997, 55–63.
4. Of Indonesia's 231 million people, about 88 percent are Muslims; of Pakistan's 162 million people, approximately 98 percent are Muslims; India's 138 million Muslims account for about 13 percent of the total population.
5. Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, *Unequal Citizens: Muslim Women in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).
6. See also Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).
7. Although the film, in Hindi, was shown with Gujarati rather than English subtitles, my research assistant, fluent in both Hindi and Gujarati, whispered translations in my ear. The outstanding acting, together with the broad style of Bollywood, made the story easy to follow. I have since seen the film with English subtitles.
8. See, for example, Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), chaps. 4 and 5; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), chap. 3; there are many others (for a good summary see Sarkar, p. 135 n. 1). Bankimchandra's last name may also be given as Chattopadhyay, the version of his name that Partha Chatterjee uses. The anthem is sometimes transliterated *Vande* instead of *Bande.*
9. Translated from the Bengali by Sri Aurobindo, and on file in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, available online at http://intyoga.online.fr/bande.htm.

10. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World,* trans. Surendranath Tagore (a nephew) (London: Penguin, 1985), 29.
11. Unattributed translation, online at a government of India site.
12. Sanjib K. Ghosh, "Tagore Denied Jana Gana Mana Was for the King," *India Abroad,* December 2, 2005, points out that at the ceremony a separate song of welcome for the king was sung (in Hindi). Although the vernacular press correctly described the two different songs, Reuters's briefer report conflated them, thus giving rise to the confusion. Tagore wrote a letter on November 20, 1937, published in *Vichitra,* stating that he had been invited to write a song in praise of the king and had reacted angrily. "It was under the stress of this reaction that I proclaimed, in the Jana gana mana song, the victory of the Dispenser of India's destiny . . . of Him who dwells within the heart of man and leads the multitudes. This could not by any means be George the Fifth or George the Sixth or any other George."
13. See Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation,* p. 164.

1. Genocide in Gujarat

Epigraph: Nabaneeta Dev Sen is one of the leading poets and prose writers in the Bengali language. Her poem (of which I quote only the first stanza) was written apropos of the Gujarat massacre and was published in the Gujarat issue of *The Little Magazine* (vol. 3, no. 2, 2002). Translation from the Bengali is by *The Little Magazine.*

1. Interview with Mukhul Sinha, June 2004. This is typical Indian train behavior and does not by itself indicate any particular lawlessness.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. The Banerjee Commission has officially criticized the behavior of the fire brigade.
4. E-mail from Mukhul Sinha, May 8, 2006.
5. Interview with Sinha, June 2004.
6. See Tanika Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly,* July 13, 2002, reprinted in *Fascism in India,* ed. Chaitanya Krishna (Delhi: Manak, 2003), 159.
7. "Report of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal," www.sabrang.com.
8. These terms replace the discarded term "untouchables."
9. See Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror."
10. See Bhikhu Parekh, "Making Sense of Gujarat," in Krishna, *Fascism in India,* 511–523.

11. Report of Singh's testimony to the Nanavati Commission, rediff.com, May 9, 2001.

12. "Leaders 'Incited' Anti-Sikh Riots," *BBC News World Edition,* August 8, 2005, online.

13. "India's New Leader Vows Not to Tolerate Sectarian Riots," *New York Times,* May 21, 2004, A14.

14. I owe much to an interview with Girish Patel, June 17, 2004.

15. See Girish Patel, "Narendra Modi's One-Day Cricket: What and Why?" in Krishna, *Fascism in India,* 451–457. Mukhul Sinha expressed the same view in his interview. See also Achyut Yagnik, "The Pathology of Gujarat," in Krishna, *Fascism in India,* 495–501.

16. Interview with Patel, June 17, 2004.

17. Patel, "Narendra Modi's One-Day Cricket," 448.

18. Teesta Setalvad, referring to publications in *Communalism Combat,* the journal she and her husband edit.

19. *Hindustan Times,* May 6, 2002.

20. *Times of India* News Network, December 15, 2002.

21. *Times of India,* December 20, 2002.

22. Details in this section are drawn from a three-part article, "Diary of a Policeman," *Indian Express,* April 15–17, 2004.

23. The English text of the speech is reproduced in Siddharth Varadarajan, ed., *Gujarat* (Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 450–452.

24. Interview with Arun Shourie, January 22, 2005.

25. See Arun Shourie, *The World of Fatwas* (Delhi: ASA Publications, 1995).

26. The Gujarat issue (vol. 3, no. 2, 2002) contains poetry, fiction, and essays.

27. For example, *Fascism in India* and Varadarajan's *Gujarat.* See also Flavia Agnes, ed., *Of Lofty Claims and Muffled Voices* (Mumbai: Majlis, 2002).

28. Interview with Swaha Das, March 10, 2004.

29. Interview with Teesta Setalvad, June 20, 2004.

30. For the report, see http://www.sabrang.com. Another valuable report, focused on gender issues, is International Initiative for Justice, *Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat,* available online at http://www.onlinevolunteers.org/gujarat/reports/iijg/2003/fullreport.pdf. On the status of children, see *The Next Generation: In the Wake of the Genocide,* a report by an independent team of citizens, at http://www.onlinevolunteers.org/gujarat/reports/children.

31. "'Missing Canvas' in Godhra," *The Hindu,* January 20, 2005.

32. "Godhra: Engineering Experts Question Police Theory," ibid., January 18, 2005, 11; and "Godhra Fire Accidental, Says Banerjee Panel," ibid., January 18, 2005, 1, 11; and ibid., 11, "Banerjee Lists Reasons against Sabotage Theory," "Report Nails the Lie of Modi Government: CPI(M)," and "A Conspiracy, Insist Gujarat Police."

33. "Godhra Fire Accidental," 1.

34. "Godhra: Engineering Experts Question."

35. *Chairman, Railways Board v. Mrs. Chandrima Das,* AIR 2000, S. Ct. 988.

36. *Zahira Habibulla H. Sheikh and Anr. v. State of Gujarat and Ors,* April 12, 2004, S. Ct.

37. See Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Modesty of Mrs. Bajaj: India's Problematic Route to Sexual Harassment Law," in *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law,* ed. Catharine MacKinnon and Reva Siegel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 633–654.

38. Interview with Indira Jaising, June 2004. I take the facts of the case from the brief.

39. The analysis presented here is the one given by Jaising in the interview; in some respects it goes beyond what is argued in the brief.

40. Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror."

41. Pratap Banu Mehta, "Facing Intolerance," *The Hindu,* December 20, 2002.

42. A subsequent attack on a Swaminarayan temple in Gujarat was immediately blamed by the local police on local Muslims, who were allegedly retaliating for the riots; numerous suspects were arrested. The actual perpetrators were apprehended later in Kashmir and confessed that the violence was planned by a separatist Kashmiri group with no links to local Gujarati Muslims.

43. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

44. Idem, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture, and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

45. See, for example, Robert J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

46. "Clinton's Straight Talk," *The Dawn,* March 5, 2003.

47. "Report of the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal," www.sabrang.com.

48. See "Persona Non Grata," editorial, *Times of India,* March 19, 2005; "A Slap in Mr. Modi's Face," editorial, *The Hindu,* March 19, 2005.

49. "Persona Non Grata."

50. "Rights Groups Hail Visa Denial to Modi," *Hindustan Times,* March 19, 2005.

51. "Modi Visa: Muslim Bodies Hail U.S. Move," rediff.com, March 19, 2005.

2. The Human Face of the Hindu Right

Epigraph: Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 129–130.

1. I interviewed K. K. Shastri on June 18, 2004; Mona Mehta interviewed him again on June 27.

2. Interview with Devendra Swarup, March 18, 2004.

3. Pramod Kumar, "Stop Criticizing RSS or Try to Create an Organization like RSS—Atal Behari Vajpayee," *Organiser,* January 2, 2005.

4. "Trouble in the ICSSR," *The Hindu,* July 20, 2001.

5. Interview with Arun Shourie, January 22, 2005.

6. A complete list of Shourie's writings is on the website http://arunshourie.voiceofdharma.com. This website is not maintained by Shourie, so one should not impute the arrogant name "voice of the moral law" to him. On Christianity, see *Harvesting Our Soul: Missionaries, Their Design, Their Claims* (Delhi: ASA, 2000); on Islam, *The World of Fatwas: or the Shariah in Action* (Delhi: ASA, 1995); on Hinduism, *Hinduism: Essence and Consequence* (Delhi: ASA, 1980); on the historians, *Eminent Historians: Their Technology, their Line, Their Fraud* (Delhi: ASA, 1998).

7. At the request of Gurcharan Das, I have used both names or only his first name in referring to him. He explains that it would be incorrect to refer to him as Das, because, strictly speaking, Das is a suffix rather than a last name. His name, combining *guru* (teacher), *charan* (feet), and *das* (servant), means "Humble Servant of the Guru's Feet." Until G.D. was three, his name was Ashok Kumar, which means "Prince of Happiness." His grandmother didn't like his bearing the name of a famous Bollywood movie star, so she asked her guru to rename the boy.

8. Interview with Gurcharan Das, Delhi, June 2004.

9. Gurcharan Das, "India Shining (1984–2004), RIP?" *Outlook,* July 12, 2004.

10. Idem, "Secularism Gone Awry," *Times of India,* May 18, 2003.

11. Idem, "Disappointed Idealism," ibid., May 5, 2002.

12. Idem, "Secularism Gone Awry."

13. Idem, "Human Frailty," *Times of India,* November 16, 2003. I cannot conceal a certain element of recycling here: Gurcharan Das's column for that day discusses an article of mine, "'On Equal Conditions': Constitutions as Protectors of the Vulnerable." His parallels to U.S. history are drawn from my own analysis.

3. Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru

Epigraph: Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 340–341.

1. He did, however, demonstrate in 1905 against the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon.

2. The standard biography of Tagore is Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man* (London: Bloomsbury, 1995). See also their *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). An excellent short introduction to Tagore's career and thought is Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," *New York Review of Books,* June 26, 1997, 55–63. See also Isaiah Berlin, "Rabindranath Tagore and the Consciousness of Nationality," in *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

3. Santiniketan is often also spelled Shantiniketan, and should always be pronounced that way. Transliteration from modern Indian languages into English follows various schemes. I use the form that I learned from the people there when I first visited. In citations I preserve the spelling used by the writer.

4. I use "Kolkata" rather than the earlier "Calcutta," imposed by the British, when discussing current events, but "Calcutta" when discussing a time before independence. Although the switch back to the more indigenous form was prompted by the Hindu right, this is one suggestion that has won approval across the board.

5. See Rabindranath Tagore, *Gora,* trans. W. W. Pearson (New Delhi: Rupa, 2002), for a sympathetic account of that aspect of the Samaj.

6. *Gora* provides a fine account of the Samaj's intolerance of traditional Hinduism.

7. Discussion of "Prakritir Pratishodh" (Nature's Revenge), in Tagore's *My Reminiscences,* quoted in Dutta and Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore,* 84.

8. Ibid.

9. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 172.

10. Ibid., 171.

11. Dutta and Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore,* 124.

12. Generally valuable is the multivolume series The Oxford Tagore Translations (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999–2003), which includes many poems and works of fiction, as well as essays on literature and language. William Radice's Penguin translations of selected poetry and short stories attain a high standard.

13. Several of the best stories are translated well in the excellent collection *Of Women, Outcastes, Peasants, and Rebels,* ed. and trans. Kalpana Bardhan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

14. Ibid., 96–109; quotation on 102.

15. Ibid., 84–95.

16. Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World,* trans. Surendranath Tagore (London: Penguin, 1985). The translation, by Tagore's nephew, is not very good, but until very recently it was the only one available.

17. Satyajit Ray, quoted in Dutta and Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore,* 133.

18. K. M. Sen, *Hinduism* (London: Penguin, 1961), now published in a new edition with a foreword by Amartya Sen (London: Penguin, 2005).

19. For economics, in 1998.

20. One of the books, *The Santiniketan School,* has not been translated; the other, *Joy in All Work (Ananda Sarbakaje),* has been translated in an abridged version by Indrani Sen, Swati Ghosh, and Pronoti Sinha (Calcutta: Roseprint, 1999).

21. Amita Sen is the source for all of the description that follows.

22. In the notes to *A Tagore Reader* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), editor Amiya Chakravarty asserts that Tagore had discussions with both Dewey and Maria Montessori (388), but he offers no evidence. He does quote an admiring letter from Helen Keller that calls the school a "bright pledge of a nobler civilization" (ibid.).

23. See Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," 56; he refers to Michael Young, *The Elmhirsts of Dartington: The Creation of an Utopian Community* (London: Routledge, 1982).

24. Rabindranath Tagore, "Nari" (Women), extract translated in Sumit Sarkar, "*Ghare Baire* in Its Times," in *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World: A Critical Companion,* ed. P. K. Datta (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), 168.

25. On this general theme see S. Sarkar, "*Ghare Baire* in Its Times"; and Tanika Sarkar, "Many Faces of Love: Country, Woman, and God in *The Home and the World,*" in Datta, *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World,* 27–44.

26. Letter quoted in Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," 59–60. See Dutta and Robinson, *Rabindranath Tagore,* 226.

27. In Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader,* 101.

28. Rabindranath Tagore, "To Teachers," ibid., 217.

29. Quoted in Amartya Sen, "Tagore and His India," 60.

30. Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism," in Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader,* 199–200.

31. Ibid., 199.

32. Tagore, *The Home and the World,* 81. The Datta anthology, *Rabindranath Tagore's The Home and the World: A Critical Companion,* is a very fine collection of articles on the novel, and the introduction by Datta is particularly helpful in introducing the reader to the novel's treatment of nationalism, its historical background, and its gender dynamics.

33. Tagore, *The Home and the World,* 85.

34. See also S. Sarkar, "*Ghare Baire* in Its Times."

35. Here I do not agree with S. Sarkar, who reads Nikhil in a more positive light, as the "new man" Tagore wanted to advocate.

36. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (New York: Dover, 1983). The work was first written in Gujarati and was translated into English by Mahadev Desai; it covers events only up to 1920 and was initially published in serial form starting in 1925. A second volume of autobiographical writing that gives more detail about Gandhi's early career in South Africa, titled *Satyagraha in South Africa,* was published in 1928.

37. The entire paragraph is quoted at http://www.kamat.com/mmgandhi/churchill.htm.

38. Nehru, *Autobiography* (1936; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 515.

39. Gandhi, *Autobiography,* 1.

40. Ibid., 9–10.

41. Erik Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969).

42. Gandhi, *Autobiography,* 19–20.

43. Ibid., 23–24.

44. Ibid., 26.

45. Ibid., 30.
46. Ibid., 31.
47. Ibid., 60.
48. See Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, 194.
49. See quotations from Gandhi's *Collected Works* in *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*, ed. Dennis Dalton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 9.
50. Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
51. Ibid., 81.
52. See Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 81–82.
53. See *The Gandhi Reader*, ed. Homer A. Jack (New York: Grove, 1956), 339–340.
54. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 53.
55. See the excellent discussion of this aspect of his thought by Partha Chatterjee in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), chap. 4.
56. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 97.
57. Gandhi's views on this topic were not consistent over time; sometimes he approved in a limited and provisional way of machines that would not undermine workers' physical condition. He used forms of machinery that his writings condemn, particularly trains.
58. Letter quoted in Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 144–145. The occasion was Indira's impending marriage to (the unrelated) Feroze Gandhi: her father is asking her to take (Mohandas) Gandhi's advice.
59. Quoted in Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 243.
60. See Dalton, *Mahatma Gandhi*, 101–102.
61. Quoted in Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 463.
62. Ibid., 488–489.
63. Ibid., 218.
64. Extract from Sanger's *Autobiography*, in ibid., 307.
65. From "Badhu" (The Bride), translated by Nabaneeta Dev Sen (and thus one of the few instances in which Tagore found a first-rate poet as his translator).
66. Reported in Amita Sen, *Anando Sharbokaji* (in Bengali), 2d ed. (Calcutta: Tagore Research Institute, 1996), 132; the abridged English version, *Joy in All Work*, does not contain this incident, although it does contain a facsimile of Tagore's inscription.

67. Extract from article by Mahadev Desai, in Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 172–181.
68. *Romain Rolland and Gandhi Correspondence*, foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru (New Delhi: Government of India, 1976), 12–13. See also Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 171, an extract from one of Gandhi's journal articles in which he stated that "idol-worship is part of human nature."
69. Rabindranath Tagore, "The Call of Truth," in Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 223–224.
70. See Jack, *The Gandhi Reader*, 152: Gandhi says: "Well, is it not creditable that I have made High Court Vakils scrape and wash their pots?"
71. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 364.
72. In Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, 152.
73. Nehru, *Autobiography*, 516. Nehru also sees that Gandhi's emphasis on rural poverty as ideal conduces to the maintenance of feudal land tenure and all the evils of domination with which that system is bound up.
74. Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth*, 122.
75. Ibid., 248.
76. Ibid., 244, 251.
77. Two recent biographies are those of Judith Brown (cited above) and Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru: The Invention of India* (New York: Arcade, 2003); I review both in *New Republic*, February 14, 2005, 25–31. Brown's contains many documents not previously available to biographers; but the most insightful biography remains that of S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru*, 3 vols. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973–1984).
78. Quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru*, 216.
79. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 44.
80. Quoted in Brown, *Nehru*, 128; and Tharoor, *Nehru*, 101.
81. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 22.
82. Nehru, *Autobiography*, 433–449.
83. See Tharoor, *Nehru*, 33.
84. Ibid.
85. Nehru, *Autobiography*, 43.
86. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 44.
87. Letter quoted in Brown, Nehru, 111.
88. Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, 49.
89. Nehru, *Autobiography*, 605.
90. Quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru*, 83.
91. On this exchange, see Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 7–8.

92. According to Nehru, *Autobiography,* 68, Jinnah did not fit in with Congress because of his elitist outlook; he once suggested that only people with university degrees should be Congress members.

93. Ibid., 605.

94. The text of the speech, like that of the Gettysburg Address, is widely available. One online source is http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947nehru1.html. For a recording of Nehru actually delivering the speech, go to http://harappa.com/sounds/nehru.html.

95. Quoted in Brown, *Nehru,* 68; Tharoor, *Nehru,* 215.

96. Nehru, *Autobiography,* 599.

97. Quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru,* 215.

98. On the general situation, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); on land, see Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

99. Letter quoted in Tharoor, *Nehru,* 48.

100. Nehru, *The Discovery of India,* 75.

101. There are elements of elitism too, no doubt: particularly in the statement that the proletariat are "dull certainly, uninteresting individually"; Nehru, *Autobiography,* 78. Partha Chatterjee discusses this passage acutely in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 148.

102. See Nehru, *The Discovery of India,* 409, confessing his own "partiality" for the "literary aspects of education" but arguing that what people really need to "fit into the modern world" is science.

103. See the excellent discussion in Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought,* 155–157.

4. A Democracy of Pluralism, Respect, Equality

1. AIR 1967 SC 1643.

2. AIR 1973 SC 1918.

3. See the discussion of these aspects of the Constitution in Gary J. Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law: India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), esp. chaps. 1 and 4.

4. For a good recent study, see V. K. Ramachandran, "On Kerala's Development Achievements," in *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives,* ed. Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 205–356.

5. See Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); idem, *India: Development and Participation* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), chap. 7.

6. Another factor affecting women's life chances in Kerala is the relative rarity of the custom of dowry, together with practices of matrilineal property transmission and matrilocal residence. A daughter will stay in her parents' home to help them in their old age rather than moving out (at great expense) to help someone else's family.

7. See Drèze and Sen, *India: Development and Participation.*

8. See Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon, *Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

9. AIR 1992 SC 1958.

10. AIR 1993 SC 2178.

11. *People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India and Ors,* Writ petition (Civil) No. 196 of 2001.

12. Sen and Drèze, *India: Development and Participation* and *Hunger and Public Action.*

13. Marc Galanter, *Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1.

14. See idem, "The Long Half-Life of Reservations," in *India's Living Constitution,* ed. Zoya Hasan, E. Sridharan, and R. Sudarshan (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 306–318.

15. Ibid., 310. In *Indra Sawhne v. Union of India,* 1997 SCC (L & S) Supp. 1, at 475–476, the Supreme Court established income ceilings for the potential beneficiaries of the new measures.

16. The position of chief minister is close to that of an American state governor, but each Indian state also has a governor, who is federally appointed rather than elected, and whose powers are restricted and in part ceremonial (analogous to those of the nation's president).

17. Interview with Devendra Swarup, March 2004.

18. Interview with Arun Shourie, January 2005.

19. India once had a large Jewish population, especially in the princely states of Cochin and Travancore. Most of that population has now emigrated to Israel, and an entire synagogue from Cochin now rests in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. See Orpa Slapak, ed., *The Jews of India* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum Publications, 1995). The whole question of personal laws is further discussed in Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2000), chap. 3; and idem, "'On Equal Conditions': Constitutions as Protectors of the Vulnerable," in *Will Secular India Survive?* ed. Mushirul Hasan (Delhi:

imprintOne, 2004), 22–49. See also Archana Parashar, *Women and Family Law Reform in India: Uniform Code and Gender Equality* (Delhi: Sage, 1992); Flavia Agnes, *Law and Gender Inequality: The Politics of Women's Rights in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Zoya Hasan, ed., *Forging Identities: Gender, Communities and the State in India* (Delhi: Kali for Women; and Boulder: Westview, 1994).

20. See Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002).

21. See Bina Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chap. 5; and Parashar, *Women and Family Law Reform.*

22. See Jacobsohn, *The Wheel of Law,* chap. 1.

23. *State of Bombay v. Narasu Appa Mali* (AIR 1952 Bom 84).

24. The Supreme Court repeated the 1952 view in *Krishna Singh v. Mathura Ahir* (AIR 1980 SC 707). A pair of cases in 1996 and 1997 again addressed the relationship between the Fundamental Rights and personal laws, but with no clear result, since different benches of the Supreme Court came to opposite conclusions. In *C. Masilamani Mudaliar v. Idol of Sri S.S. Thirukoil* (AIR 1996, 8 SCC 525), one bench held that personal laws "must be consistent with the Constitution lest they become void if they violate fundamental rights." However, in the Ahmedabad Women's Group's case (AIR 1997, 3 SCC 573), another bench categorically stated that personal laws are beyond the reach of the Fundamental Rights.

25. For further discussion, see Agarwal, *A Field of One's Own,* 224–226. The judgment did not correct the inequality of the Travancore law or declare it unconstitutional on grounds of sex equality. The Court held, on a technicality, that Christians in Kerala were henceforth to be governed by the (nonreligious) Indian Succession Act rather than by Travancore-Cochin succession laws for Christians. See also Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development,* chap. 3.

26. *Ammini Ej v. UOI* and *Mary Sonia Zachariah v. UOI,* both (AIR 1995 Ker 252).

27. Sylvia Vatuk, "Muslim Women and Personal Law," in *In a Minority: Essays on Muslim Women in India,* ed. Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18–68.

28. For all the major documents relating to the case, see Asghar Ali Engineer, ed., *The Shah Bano Controversy* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1987).

29. Polygamy, though legal for Muslims, is far from the norm: estimates vary from around 5 percent of marriages to 14 percent; see Vatuk, "Muslim Women and Personal Law"; and Hasan, *Forging Identities.*

30. *Mohammed Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum & Others* (AIR 1985 SC 945).

31. See Sen and Drèze, *India: Democracy and Participation.*

32. Hasan and Menon, *Unequal Citizens,* 245.

33. See Martha Alter Chen, *Perpetual Mourning: Widowhood in Rural India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000; and Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); and idem, ed., *Widows in India: Social Neglect and Public Action* (Delhi: Sage, 1998). Child marriage is illegal, but the laws are not enforced in the states (primarily in the north) where child marriage is traditional. Widow abuse and neglect are widespread, and widows are often forbidden by their in-laws to seek employment—again, problems that are social more than legal, although the underenforcement of laws against domestic abuse makes them worse, as do unequal property rights. The recent widely praised film *Water,* by Deepa Mehta, greatly oversimplifies the situation of widows, suggesting that what they need most is permission to remarry; in fact most widows studied by Chen have no desire to remarry. What they want above all are property rights and employment opportunities.

34. (2001) 7 SCC 740.

35. I recommended this very solution in *Women and Human Development,* chap. 3.

5. *The Rise of the Hindu Right*

Epigraph: M. S. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Jagarana Prakashan, 1966), 248.

1. Ibid., 348.

2. An invaluable brief history of the movement is in Tapan Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993). For a friendly "insider" account of high quality, see Walter K. Andersen and Shridar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron* (New Delhi: Vistaar, 1987). A magisterial analytical history is Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also Thomas Blom Hansen's valuable analysis *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindutva Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). Two studies that are less readily accessible to the American reader are Pralay Kanungo, *RSS's Tryst with Politics* (Delhi: Manohar, 2002); and D. R. Goyal, *Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh* (Delhi: Radha Krishna, 1979).

3. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts,* 414.

4. Kanungo, however, argues that its identity was all along political: see *RSS's Tryst with Politics.*

5. Hedgewar's views summarized in an official RSS publication quoted in Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags,* 15.

6. http://freeindia.org/biographies/greatleaders/golwalkar/index.htm.

7. Interview with Sridhar Damle, Villa Park, Ill., May 2, 2004.

8. K. M. Sen, *Hinduism* (1961; reprint, London: Penguin, 2005). K. M. Sen was a renowned scholar of Hinduism whom Rabindranath Tagore invited to Santiniketan to become part of his school. That is how Amita Sen came to be born in Santiniketan. Thus K. M. Sen is Amartya Sen's *maternal* grandfather; his father simply happened to have the same name.

9. Ibid., 11.

10. Ibid., 3.

11. V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* 5th ed. (Bombay: S. S. Savarkar, 1969), 85.

12. Ibid., frontispiece.

13. Ibid., 136.

14. Ibid., 113.

15. Ibid., 112.

16. Ibid., 139.

17. Ibid., 141.

18. M. S. Golwalkar, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined,* 4th ed. (Nagpur: P. V. Betwalkar, 1947).

19. Ibid., 21.

20. Ibid., 42.

21. Ibid., 43.

22. Ibid., 53.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 55–56.

25. See Suzanne and Lloyd Rudolph, "Modern Hate," *New Republic,* March 22, 1993, 24–29.

26. Quoted in Rajesh Ramachandran, "The Mastermind?" *Outlook Magazine,* September 6, 2004.

27. Ibid. For an account of the two plots, with further references, see Koenraad Elst, *Gandhi and Godse: A Review and a Critique* (Delhi: Voice of India, 2001), chap. 1.

28. Elst, *Gandhi and Godse,* p. 3.

29. Ibid., 5–6.

30. www.nathuramgodse.com. The quotations from Godse in the following paragraphs are from this website.

31. Hindi and Urdu are probably best seen as different dialects. The major difference between them is the script in which they are written: Persian in the case of Urdu, Devanagari (the Sanskrit script) in the case of Hindi. Thus it is odd to apply the ideas of linguistic nationalism to this question.

32. Elst, *Gandhi and Godse,* 6, citing Justice G. D. Khosla's memoir, *Murder of the Mahatma.*

33. Letter to ministers, February 5, 1948, quoted in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 87.

34. Quoted in ibid.

35. Ibid., 108.

36. Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts,* 103.

37. Ibid., 59.

38. Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags,* 53; Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 315.

39. Quoted in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 317.

40. Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags,* 61.

41. See Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 390 ff., referring to Anuradha Kapur, "Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram," in *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today,* ed. P. K. Datta (Delhi: Viking, 1993).

42. Kapur, "Deity to Crusader," quoted in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 391.

43. Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags,* 63.

44. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 389.

45. Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93.

46. See Paula Richman, ed., *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). As Sheldon Pollack notes, the tradition of using the Ramayana to construct an evil "other" against a pure "Hinduism" is itself not new, but was practiced in Hindu courts from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries (at a time when surrounding noncourt cultures displayed a more flexible and pluralistic understanding); see "Ramayana and Political Imagination in India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52 (1993), 261–297.

47. Romila Thapar, "The Ramayana Syndrome," *Seminar* 353, January 1989, 74, discussed in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement,* 389.

48. L. I. Rudolph, "The Media and Cultural Politics," in *Electoral Politics in India*, ed. S. K. Mitra and J. Chiriyankandath (New Delhi: Segment Books, 1992), 92, discussed in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 389–390.

49. See K. N. Pannikar, "A Historical Overview," in *Anatomy of a Confrontation: The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi Issue*, ed. S. Gopal (New Delhi: Viking, 1991), 24 ff., discussed in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 92.

50. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 92–93. One member of the group gave an on-camera account of his role in the events to a documentary filmmaker but refused to name the other participants.

51. See ibid., 554.

52. Ibid., 416.

53. Both quoted in Rajagopal, *Politics after Television*, 224.

54. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 416–417.

55. Ibid., 420.

56. Ashis Nandy et al., *Creating a Nationality: Ramjanmabhumi Movement and the Fear of the Self* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), quoted in Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 452.

57. My description is based on Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, 455.

58. Ibid., 456.

59. Ibid., 457.

60. Quoted in ibid., 475.

61. Ibid.

62. See the vigorous argument in Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, *New Nukes: India, Pakistan, and Global Nuclear Disarmament* (New York: Olive Branch, 2000), with an introduction by Arundhati Roy.

63. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, passim.

64. *The Telegraph* (India), June 12, 2005.

65. *The Hindu*, June 19, 2005.

66. From echarcha.com, a poster named *Vakil Sahib* (Mr. Lawyer).

67. Indo-Asian News Service, Kolkata, June 5, 2005. Basu, born in 1914, still plays a leading part in leftist politics.

6. Fantasies of Purity and Domination

First epigraph: Jayadeva, *Gitagovinda*, in *Love Song of the Dark Lord: Jayadeva's Gitagovinda*, ed. and trans. Barbara S. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 77. *Second epigraph:* The word rendered "Muslims" *(miyas)* is a word meaning "mister" that is customarily used to refer to Muslims.

1. Tanika Sarkar, "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 13, 2002, 2872–76.

2. Flavia Agnes, "Affidavit," in *Of Lofty Claims and Muffled Voices*, ed. Flavia Agnes (Bombay: Majlis, 2002), 69. See also the excellent analysis of Gujarat's "rape culture" in Upendra Baxi, "The Second Gujarat Catastrophe," in *Fascism in India*, ed. Chaitanya Krishna (Delhi: Manak, 2003), 58–96.

3. See Ruth Baldwin, "Gujarat's Gendered Violence," *The Nation*, September 30, 2002 (online only), quoting from testimony of witnesses and leaders of nongovernmental organizations.

4. Paul Courtright, *Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), to be discussed in Chapter 7.

5. James W. Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), to be discussed in Chapter 7.

6. This connection of femaleness to disgust is not explicitly stressed in Theweleit's analysis, although it is ubiquitous in it. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

7. Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906).

8. Particularly on Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity* and Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Both books draw on a wide range of psychological and philosophical analyses.

9. See the more extensive methodological remarks in Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, chap. 5.

10. Leo Steinberg, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

11. Michael Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality Volume 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

12. See Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Vintage, 1989), who argues that Augustine is the origin of the view that problematizes sexuality; earlier church fathers focused instead on human helplessness.

13. See generally Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

14. Lucian, *Dialogues of the Gods*, trans. David Konstan, in "Enacting *Erôs*," in *The Sleep of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 355. Konstan retains some key Greek words in parentheses in his translation.

15. The only reliable translation and the best account of the purposes and

content of the treatise is Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, *Kama Sutra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

16. See ibid.

17. In Courtright, *Ganesa,* 31, drawing from a collection of legends by T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography,* 4 vols. (Madras, 1914). Whatever the controversy surrounding Courtright's interpretations, nobody disputes that these myths exist as he reports them.

18. See Courtright, *Ganesa,* 44–45.

19. See Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Siva: The Erotic Ascetic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 39, 257. In this early book, Doniger uses her then-married name.

20. Miller, *Love Song of the Dark Lord,* xiii–xvi.

21. Ibid., xiii. The poem, well translated into German in the eighteenth century, was much admired by Goethe, whose spirit and whose critique of bourgeois German morality are in many ways Jayadevan in spirit.

22. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (London: MacMillan, 1913), section 73.

23. See the excellent account of these norms in Roop Rekha Verma, "Femininity, Equality, and Personhood," in *Women, Culture and Development,* ed. Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 433–443.

24. See studies cited in Martha C. Nussbaum, "Women's Bodies: Violence, Security, Capabilities," *Journal of Human Development* 6 (2005), 167–183.

25. See Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian* (London: Allen Lane, 2005). The image on the cover is a typical example of this norm.

26. See Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

27. See ibid.

28. George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

29. Ibid., 10.

30. Ibid., 36.

31. See *Reynolds v. United States,* 98 U.S. 145 (1878), denying Mormons the right to polygamous marriages, where *sati* (the immolation of a woman on her husband's funeral pyre) is coupled with pagan child sacrifice, and both with a disdain for non-Western cultures. ("Polygamy has always been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people.")

32. See Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality,* 36, on Jews in Germany: "It was the reaction of outsiders trying to get inside and finding the door locked for no conceivable fault of their own; of people who wanted to be normal but who found themselves trapped into abnormality."

33. Laine, *Shivaji,* 33, translating from Paramananda.

34. Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

35. Nehru argued that the British more generally supported the "obscurantist, reactionary" elements in Indian culture as the authentic ones in order to prevent Indians from progressing: see Nehru, *Autobiography* (1936; reprint, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 449.

36. On this history see, among other important feminist works, Kumari Jayawardena and Malathi de Alwis, eds., *Embodied Violence: Communalising Women's Sexuality in South Asia* (London: Zed, 1993); Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998); Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta, eds., *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* (Kolkata: Stree, 2003).

37. See Martha C. Nussbaum, "Objectification," in *Sex and Social Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 213–239. On the women of the Hindu right, see Tapan Basu et al., *Khaki Shorts, Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993), 79–87. Women are usually cast in a subordinate and passive role, but at times, recently, they have been permitted to be allies in the pursuit of violence. This change is possible because it is the Muslim woman, and Muslim sexuality, on whom stigmatization and anxiety focus.

38. For Fernandes's speech and this critical response, see Editor's Note to Barkha Dutt, "'Nothing New?' Women as Victims in Gujarat," in *Gujarat,* ed. Siddharth Varadarajan (Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 215; see also Agnes, "Affidavit," 17.

39. This analysis draws on Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity;* and the psychological research (by Paul Rozin and others) discussed there.

40. India, *Census,* online; I give the "adjusted" figures, which omit Jammu, Kashmir, and Assam.

41. See Mohan Rao, *From Population Control to Reproductive Health: Malthusian Arithmetic* (Delhi: Sage, 2005), chap. 6.

42. Ibid.

43. In Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *Indian Diary*, ed. Niraja Jayal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

44. Compare Theweleit's account of the fear of Communists (the "red tide") and Jews in Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, trans. S. Conway, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 and 1989), passim.

45. See S. Anandhi, "Reproductive Bodies and Regulated Sexuality: Birth Control Debates in Early Twentieth Century Tamilnadu," in *A Question of Silence? The Sexual Economies of Modern India*, ed. Mary E. John and Janaki Nair (Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998), discussed in Mohan Rao, *From Population Control to Reproductive Health.*

46. Quoted in Mohan Rao, *From Population Control to Reproductive Health*, chap. 6.

47. This analysis is based on Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, chap. 4, which discusses the sociological and psychological literature. Particularly important is Erving Goffman's classic *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963).

48. This analysis is based on Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, chap. 2, which reviews the empirical and philosophical literature on disgust and develops a theory that accounts for the phenomena.

49. See the extensive account of "projective disgust" in ibid.

50. Weininger, *Sex and Character*, discussed in ibid.

51. See also William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); in Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity*, chaps. 2 and 3, I contest most of Miller's normative conclusions but admire his analysis.

52. Andrea Dworkin, "Repulsion," in *Intercourse* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 3–20.

53. On the connection between Jünger's imagery and misogynistic torture and murder, see the discussion in Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2: 160–162, containing S. Conway's translation of the passage quoted in the text.

54. Although we do not hear a great deal about Nazi rapes of Jewish women, there is a great deal of evidence of rape, forced prostitution, and the forced exchange of sex for survival. Many relevant documents are excavated in Catharine MacKinnon, "Genocide's Sexuality," in *Are Women Human and Other International Dialogues* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 202–233 at 222; see also idem, "Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace," ibid., 141–159 at 158 and 337 n. 77, on evidence of sexual torture presented to the Nuremberg tribunal.

7. The Assault on History

Epigraph: Tanika Sarkar, writing about the Gujarat killings in "Semiotics of Terror: Muslim Children and Women in Hindu Rashtra," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 13, 2002, reprinted in *Fascism in India*, ed. Chaitanya Krishna (Delhi: Manak, 2003), 159.

1. V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* 5th ed. (Bombay: S. S. Savarkar, 1969), 41–42.

2. From a collection of e-mails gathered by the FBI, investigating the threats against Courtright. Because of FBI involvement, Courtright was able to figure out the origins of the e-mails, as Laine was not. More than 2,000 messages were examined, of which some 47 were deemed "of concern."

3. William Dalrymple, "India: The War over History," *New York Review of Books* 52 (April 7, 2005), 62–65.

4. Morphology concerns the structure of the individual word: thus it involves the study of grammatical case endings, etc.; it is distinct from the study of syntax, the study of larger grammatical units and their grouping into sentences. Although some Indo-Europeanists do study syntax comparatively, by far the largest amount of convincing work is in the areas of phonology and morphology. In this section I am grateful for detailed comments by linguists Tista Bagchi and Alan J. Nussbaum.

5. For a clear explanation, see Edwin W. Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 68–75.

6. There remains a controversy about whether it is one member among others, or rather the head of its own separate family, in such a way that we would first reconstruct Proto-Indo-European and then, bringing in Hittite, reconstruct in a separate step Proto-Indo-Hittite.

7. See the summary of evidence in Bryant, *Quest for Origins of Vedic Culture*, 73.

8. Even David Frawley, the most determined opponent of the "Aryan Migration" theory, does not contest the linguists' most basic claims: see Frawley, *The Myth of the Aryan Invasion of India* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 1994); and Navaratna S. Rajaram and David Frawley, *Vedic Aryans and the Origins of Civilization* (New Delhi: Voice of India, 2001).

9. See citations in Rajaram and Frawley, *Vedic Aryans*, 114; and in Bryant, *Quest for Origins of Vedic Culture*, 245.

10. Typical is the textbook *Ancient India*, by Makkan Lal (Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training [hereafter NCERT], 2002),

which mentions the alleged fact on both 84 and 89. The one piece of evidence mentioned is a letter that Müller (whose name is consistently misspelled in the textbook as Muller) allegedly wrote to the Duke of Argyll, saying: "I look upon the creation given in the Genesis as simply historical." Besides the lack of referencing for this key citation, no attempt is made to ask what a theologically controversial foreigner might be doing by making such a protestation of orthodoxy.

11. See Bryant's good summary of recent scholarship, *Quest for Origins of Vedic Culture,* chap. 3; he discusses the relative dating of the Vedas at the same time, and the work on these topics by Michael Witzel, Wales Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University.

12. See ibid., chaps. 9 and 12.

13. Michael Witzel continues to date the Vedas around 1500 B.C.E.; his work has spawned a flurry of online rebuttal. See Bryant's discussion of Witzel's work, with extensive bibliography; for the direct engagement between the two sides, see Witzel, "A Maritime Rigveda? How Not to Read the Ancient Texts," *The Hindu,* June 25, 2002; and reply by David Frawley, "Witzel's Vanishing Ocean—How to Read Vedic Texts Any Way You Like," ibid., July 16, 2002.

14. See B. B. Lal, *The Sarasvati Flows On: The Continuity of Indian Culture* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2002), 73, for a photo of what looks much more like a dog with a long tail than a horse.

15. Ibid., front jacket flap.

16. Bryant notes that there may be some evidence for out-migration toward the north and west in the loan words from Indo-European languages in the Finno-Ugaric languages. All this seems quite speculative. Bryant notes that the decipherment of the Indus Valley script would be a great boon to the whole debate, since it would put it on an empirical and scientific foundation; *Quest for Origins of Vedic Culture.*

17. A comprehensive account of these matters is Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu Nationalism in India* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

18. Ibid., 73–74, discussing D. B. Thegadi's 1983 lecture "Modernization without Westernization."

19. Ibid., 121. See also Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture, and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

20. For example, in his treatment of lawlike accounts of the cosmos; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 183.

21. Ibid., 103.

22. See D. N. Jha, *The Myth of the Holy Cow* (London: Verso, 2002), 13. Jha is the current president of the Indian History Congress; I am grateful to members of the congress for showing me a prepublication copy of his valuable presidential address, "Looking for a Hindu Identity."

23. See Jha, *Myth of the Holy Cow,* 21, for references.

24. Ibid., 27–30.

25. Ibid., 41–42.

26. For texts see ibid., 66–67.

27. Ibid., 146.

28. In her review in the *Times Literary Supplement* 5138 (August 2, 2002), 9, Wendy Doniger does find some of his categories a bit sharp-edged and lacking in "nuance": the whole idea of the "sacred," for example, needs more careful cultural and historical probing. But this criticism does not touch on the aspects of the book that have been found shocking.

29. "Clouds over Understanding of the Vedas," http://www.india-forum.com/articles/40/1.

30. Jha, *Myth of the Holy Cow,* xii.

31. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

32. Romila Thapar, *A History of India,* vol. 1 (Delhi: Pelican, 1966), 38.

33. Ibid., 40–41.

34. Ibid., 56.

35. Ibid., 86–87.

36. Idem, *Somanatha: The Many Voices of a History* (Delhi: Viking Penguin, 2004).

37. Ibid., 86, 87.

38. Ibid., 88.

39. "Appointment of Professor Romila Thapar to the Kluge Chair at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., An Open Letter of Protest," letter dated April 29, 2003, hard copy courtesy of Vishal Agarwal.

40. Indeed, right-wing critics of Thapar should all be required to study Ernst Badian's long review of G. E. M. de Ste. Croix's magnum opus, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981), a paradigm of tough criticism combined with generous appreciation of excellence. See Ernst Badian, "Marx in the Agora," *New York Review of Books* 29 (December 2, 1982), 47–51.

41. Interview with Romila Thapar, March 2004.

42. Thapar, *Somanatha,* 1.

43. Ibid., 233.
44. Meenakshi Jain, Review of Romila Thapar, *Somanatha, The Pioneer,* 21 March, 2004.
45. Meenakshi Jain, *Medieval India* (Delhi: NCERT, 2002), 27.
46. Ibid., 148.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 150.
49. Ramachandra Guha, "The Absent Liberal," http://www.outlookindia.com/full.asp?fodname=20040331&fname=ramguha&sid=1.
50. See Mushirul Hasan, "The BJP's Intellectual Agenda: Textbooks and Imagined History," in *Will Secular India Survive?* ed. Mushirul Hasan (Delhi: imprintOne, 2003), 167.
51. Interview with Meenakshi Jain, June 15, 2004.
52. James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
53. Nehru, in a statement written for a school textbook, quoted in ibid., 7.
54. HinduUnity.org, March 1, 2004.
55. Laine, *Shivaji,* 89.
56. Ibid., 6.
57. Ibid.
58. Ibid., 93.
59. Ibid.
60. See, for example, "Government Bans U.S. Author's Book on Shivaji," *Indian Express,* January 19, 2004, drawing on a story from Reuters, January 16, 2004.
61. "CM Justifies Ban on Book," SIFY CITIES, Sifi.com, January 19, 2004.
62. Dilip Chitre, "BORI Shame: Intolerance Tolerated," *Indian Express,* January 16, 2004.
63. "For Joshi, Siege Bad But Laine's Remarks Worse," ibid., January 20, 2004.
64. "Shivaji Row: BJP Discovers Nehru," *Times of India,* March 19, 2004; "Munde Wants Ban on Nehru Book for 'Defaming Shivaji,'" *Hindustan Times,* March 18, 2004.
65. "James Laine I think you don't know the culture of India it is at the number 1 in the world. The womens in India are very pious, good in character from past to this moment and also it will in the future also. They marry with only one man and remain married till the death . . . But in England the situation is just the opposite. James Laine the culture of your country is very dirty, ridiculous, rude, bad, notorious and crueal. The womans and man in England changes their life partner as like as we change our cloth. If a wife of one person gone in the market in the England then he is not sure whether she will come alone or come with another husband. This very common thing in your country and you are living in such a bad culture. James Laine you know this condition and still you have mention in your book Shivaji A Hindu King in Isalamic India that you are supicious about the good charaeater of mother of shivaji Maharaj and also you have used bad word for Shivaji Maharaj. I will kill you just come to India it is my promise that every Indian wants to kill you. Forget about others but I will definately kill you . . . I think you also definately have dirty relation with more than one women and also you may have change your wife for at least 5 times . . . If you come in front of me I will definately kill you . . . James Laine what your country England have just now is all that your country stolen from India . . . Therefore every people in Englans is a thief except the Indians which are theres . . . What bad things you are doing. You are ridiculous basterd, bloody, fool, rascal, scoundrel man sorry not a man a devil. If you have drunken the milk of your mother then come to India for fight, and send me reply of this mail." The original is written entirely in capital letters. The author signs his name and gives his address in Maharashtra. The fact that the author thinks Laine is English shows that he has not read the book.

66. Sociologist Gail Omvedt studied this aspect of the incident in a convincing online comment, South Asia Citizens Wire (www.sacw.net), January 8–9, 2004.
67. Interview with James Laine, April 14, 2004.
68. I am familiar with the Ingalls circles of that time directly, because my then husband, Alan Nussbaum, an Indo-European linguist, studied Sanskrit and Vedic with Ingalls—not for the reasons I mention here, but simply because he wanted to learn the languages.
69. See also Sen, *The Argumentative Indian;* and Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, "Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions," in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation,* ed. Michael Krausz (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 299–325.
70. Matilal's influential publications include *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); *The Word and the World: India's Contribution to the Study of Language* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); and two volumes of collected essays edited by Matilal's outstanding pupil Jonardon Ganeri, *Mind, Language and World* and

Ethics and Epics (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002). For an account of Matilal's career and a complete list of his publications, see the memorial volume *Relativism, Suffering and Beyond*, ed. Prasanta Bilamoria and Jitendra N. Mohanty (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997).

71. Rajiv Malhotra, "Wendy's Child Syndrome," sulekha.com, September 6, 2002.

72. Vishal Agarwal and Kalavi Venkat, "When a Cigar Becomes a Phallus: A Review of Paul Courtright's *Ganesa, Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings*," sulekha.com, December 8, 2003.

73. Interview with Wendy Doniger, May 31, 2004.

74. See Ramesh Rao, "Ganesha, Shivaji and Power Play," *India Abroad*, April 16, 2004, A22.

75. HinduUnity.org, March 1, 2004.

76. Vatsyanana, *Kamasutra*, trans. Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2004).

77. Interview with Doniger, May 31, 2004.

78. Jeffrey Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

79. Conversation with Kakar at the Esalen Institute, December 2004.

80. For one recent example from my own work, see the invited commentary "Analytic Love and Human Vulnerability: A Comment on Lawrence Friedman's 'Is There a Special Psychoanalytic Love?'" *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 53 (2005), 377–384.

81. See Malhotra, "Wendy's Child Syndrome."

82. Paul Courtright, "Studying Religion in an Age of Terror," lecture delivered in the spring of 2004 at Williams College and the University of Chicago.

83. Idem, *Ganesa: Lord of Obstacles, Lord of Beginnings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

84. Interview with Paul Courtright, March 31, 2004.

85. Courtright, "Studying Religion in an Age of Terror." I am also indebted to an interview with Courtright, March 31, 2004.

86. Courtright, *Ganesa*, 103.

87. Ibid., 109.

88. Malhotra, "Wendy's Child Syndrome."

89. Summary of his own discussions with Malhotra by Deepak Sharma, oral presentation at the Esalen Institute conference, December 2004. Sharma, a former University of Chicago graduate student, teaches at Case Western Reserve University.

90. Agarwal and Venkat, "When the Cigar Becomes a Phallus."

91. Rao, "Ganesha, Shivaji and Power Play."

92. Interview with Laine, April 14, 2004.

93. Courtright, "Studying Religion in an Age of Terror."

94. Conference in memory of Gregory Vlastos, University of California at Berkeley, May 1992. (I believe that Williams oversimplified both Foucault's ideas and those of the speaker.)

95. Hasan, "The BJP's Intellectual Agenda," 157.

96. For one first-class effort, see Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

8. The Education Wars

Epigraph: Rabindranath Tagore, "My School," in *Personality*, in *A Tagore Reader*, ed. Amiya Chakravarty (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 218.

1. *Chandra Mohan Khanna v. NCERT*, 4 SCC 578; the case concerned the definition of "state" for the purposes of the Fundamental Rights.

2. *Ms. Aruna Roy and Others v. Union of India and Others*, 7 SCC 368 (2002).

3. Rajeev Dhavan, "The Textbook Case," in Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Resist the Communalisation of Education* (Delhi: Hari Singh Kang, 2002), 9–12. This pamphlet reprints a variety of articles on the decision. The CPI(M) is the anti-Stalinist version of the Communist Party that currently governs in West Bengal and that used to govern in Kerala.

4. See *Ms. Aruna Roy v. Union of India.*

5. See Puja Birla, "CBSE Tells Its Schools: Don't Teach, Don't Discuss the Following," in *The Assault on History* (Delhi: Sahmat, Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, 2002), 35–36; and "CBSE Deletes 'Objectionable' Portions from History Textbooks," ibid., 37–38. (Many of the articles in this collection are unsigned.)

6. Sakina Yusuf Khan and Sujata Dutta Sachdeva, "Has the 'Talibanisation' of Education Begun?" ibid., 51–53.

7. These passages are reproduced in "Deleted Portions from History Textbooks," ibid., 28–34.

8. Quoted in Khan and Sachdeva, "Has the 'Talibanisation' of Education Begun?" 52.

9. I have examined the following books: Makkan Lal, *Ancient India* (class XI) (Delhi: NCERT, 2002); Meenakshi Jain, *Medieval India* (class XI)

(Delhi: NCERT, 2002); Sima Yadav, Besabi Khan Banerjee, Sanjay Dubey, and Themmichon Woleng, *India and the World* (social science, class VII) (Delhi: NCERT, 2003); Arjun Dev and Indira Arjun Dev, *Modern India* (history, class VIII) (apparently a holdover) (1989; reprint, Delhi: NCERT, 2002); Makkan Lal, Sima Yadav, Basabi Khan Banerjee, and M. Akhtar Hussein, *India and the World* (social science, class VI) (Delhi: NCERT, 2002); *Contemporary India* (class IX) (Delhi: NCERT, 2002); *Contemporary World History* (class XII) (Delhi: NCERT, 2002); *Modern India* (class XII) (Delhi: NCERT, 2003); and *Contemporary India* (social science, class X) (Delhi: NCERT, 2003).

10. The Indian History Congress published Irfan Habib, Suvira Jaiswal, and Aditya Mukherjee, *History in the New NCERT Text Books: A Report and an Index of Errors* (Kolkata, 2003). Anthologies of journalism and other articles include Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Resist the Communalisation of Education; The Assault on History;* Sahmat, ed., *Against Communalisation of Education: Essays, Press Commentary, Reportage* (Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Trust, 2002); idem, ed., *Plagiarised and Communalised: More on the NCERT Textbooks* (Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Trust, 2003); idem, ed., *Saffronised and Substandard: A Critique of the New NCERT Textbooks* (Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Trust, 2002).

11. Makkan Lal, Meenakshi Jain, and Hari Om, *History in the New NCERT Textbooks: Fallacies in the IHC Report* (Delhi: NCERT, 2003); Meenakshi Jain, *Flawed Narratives: History in the Old NCERT Textbooks* (Delhi: Delhi Historians Forum, 2003).

12. Lal et al., *India and the World* (social science, class VI), 137, twice.

13. Ibid., 138.

14. *Contemporary India* (class IX), 154; Lal, *Ancient India* (class XI), 100.

15. Lal et al., *India and the World* (class VI), 137.

16. Ibid., 138.

17. Lal, *Ancient India* (class XI), 112.

18. *Contemporary India* (class IX), 5; quoted in Sumit Sarkar, "Errors and Howlers: Class IX Social Science Textbook," in Sahmat, *Saffronised and Substandard*, 72–76.

19. Sarkar, "Errors and Howlers," 72.

20. Vishal Agarwal, "Prefatory Note" to online version of Meenakshi Jain's response to the IHC critique of her work; hard copy provided by Agarwal in 2003.

21. *Contemporary India* (class IX), 141.

22. Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, eds., *Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), summarized in idem, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

23. *Contemporary India* (class IX), 141.

24. Ibid., 140.

25. Lal, *Ancient India,* 3.

26. For a good summary, with copious textual references, see Roop Rekha Verma, "Femininity, Equality, and Personhood," in *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities,* ed. Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 433–443.

27. Habib, Jaiswal, and Mukherjee, *History in the New NCERT Text Books: Report and Index,* 70–71, 75. Jain does not respond to these criticisms in her detailed catalogue of responses in Lal, Jain, and Om, *History in the New NCERT Textbooks: Fallacies.*

28. *Contemporary India* (social science, class X), 153.

29. Ibid., 147.

30. Ibid.

31. Lal, Jain, and Om, *History in the New NCERT Textbooks: Fallacies.*

32. Ibid., 164–222.

33. Irfan Habib, *Prehistory* (Delhi: Tulika, 2001); idem, *The Indus Civilization* (Delhi: Tulika, 2002); Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur, *The Vedic Age* (Delhi: Tulika, 2003).

34. *Ms. Aruna Roy v. Union of India.*

35. Quoted in Praful Bidwai, "A Judicial Letdown," in Communist Party of India (Marxist), *Resist the Communalisation of Education.* Bidwai's article was originally published in the national magazine *Frontline.*

36. Quoted in concurring opinion in *Ms. Aruna Roy v. Union of India.*

37. A precedent that Shah cited, a case holding that the teaching of the Sanskrit language was not a constitutional violation, seems hardly apposite: it is obvious that learning Sanskrit or Latin is not the same thing as learning to be a good Hindu or Roman Catholic.

38. In a profound irony, his biodata list his current address as 18 Akbar Road (Delhi).

39. "Howlers Galore in Std. 8 Textbook on Social Science," *Times of India,* September 29, 2004.

40. "In Modi's Gujarat, Hitler Is a Textbook Hero," ibid., September 30, 2004.

41. Tina Parekh, "Modi's Gujarat Worships Hitler," ibid., July 23, 2005.

42. "'Nazi' Row over Indian Textbooks," *BBC News World Edition,* July 23, 2005, online.

43. Ibid.

44. *The Pratichi Education Report: The Delivery of Primary Education, a Study in West Bengal,* by the Pratichi Research Team, Kumar Rana, Abdur Rafique, and Amrita Sengupta, with Introduction by Amartya Sen, No. 1 (2002) (Delhi: TLM Books, 2002).
45. Ibid., 4.
46. Ibid., 42.
47. Ibid., 41.
48. Ibid., 42.
49. Ibid., 5.
50. Ibid., 52.
51. Ibid., 54.
52. Ibid., 56; for the wages of a laborer, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.
53. *Pratichi Education Report,* 53.
54. Ibid., 5.
55. Ibid., 7.
56. Ibid., 30–31.
57. Ibid., 66.
58. Tagore, "My School," 218. Compare idem, "To Teachers," in Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader,* 213–217.
59. Idem, "The Parrot's Training," in *Rabindranath Tagore: An Anthology,* ed. Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson, trans. Krishna Dutta (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 327, 329, 330.
60. Ibid., 330.
61. Krishna Kumar, *Prejudice and Pride: School Histories of the Freedom Struggle in India and Pakistan* (Delhi: Penguin, 2001), 54.
62. Agarwal, "Prefatory Note" to Jain's reply.
63. Vishal Agarwal, e-mail communication, August 3, 2004; used by permission.
64. *Contemporary India* (social science, class X), 151.
65. Jain, *Medieval India* (class XI), 155.
66. Mushirul Hasan, "The BJP's Intellectual Agenda," in *Will Secular India Survive?* ed. Mushirul Hasan (Delhi: imprintOne, 2003), 164. The quotation is from a speech Nehru gave in 1950 to students at Nagpur University. He is alluding to a similar statement by Gandhi.
67. See further Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

68. Tagore, "My School," 218.
69. Amita Sen, *Joy in All Work,* trans. Indrani Sen, Swati Ghosh, and Pronoti Sinha (Calcutta: Roseprint, 1999), 35.
70. Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952) (New York: Random House, 1992), 1981 introduction by Ellison, xxiv–xxv.
71. See, for example, http://www.worldbank.org/external/projects.
72. See Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture, and Identity* (London: Allen Lane, 2005). He notes that the longest speech ever delivered at the UN was a nine-hour oration by Krishna Menon.
73. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali,* section 35, in Chakravarty, *A Tagore Reader,* 300.

9. The Diaspora Community

Epigraph: H.R. 227, April 26, 2005, widely available, including at http://www.indolink.com/displayArticle5.php?id=042805012757.

1. Data from http://en.wikipedia.org.
2. H.R. 227, April 26, 2005.
3. Raymond Brady Williams, in conversation and in articles cited below.
4. For this history, see Raymond Brady Williams, *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 224–225.
5. Conversation with Rasheed Ahmed, Indian Muslim Council, U.S., November 2005.
6. http://www.proxsa.org/newsflash/index.html.
7. www.generousgiving.org/page.aep?sec=28&page=211.
8. Yvette Rosser, quoted in Ramesh Rao et al., *IDRF: Let the Facts Speak* (Kearney, Neb.: Morris Publishing, 2003), viii–ix.
9. http://www.idrf.org/reports/indiapost/ResponseToOutlook.html.
10. Ramesh Rao, sulekha.com, June 15, 2002.
11. Interview with Ved Prakash Nanda, August 2004.
12. http://www.alternatives.ca/article1049.html.
13. "Biju Makes Front Page of Bajrang/vhp Site," http://insaf.net/pipermail/insafny_insaf.net/2003-January/000018.html.
14. http://www.hvk.org/articles/1203/34.html.
15. Ibid.
16. Rao et al., *IDRF,* chap. 6.

17. Ibid., 69.
18. See http://www.vhp-america.org/whatwhpa/orgcomponents2.htm.
19. Mona Mehta, e-mail attachment, July 31, 2005.
20. The group's website is http://www.chingari.org.
21. Mona Mehta, e-mail attachment, July 31, 2005.
22. Interview with Ved Prakash Nanda, August 2004.
23. See biography in the Association of American Law Schools directory of law teachers.
24. See, for example, Ved Prakash Nanda, "Darfur Accord Must Succeed," *Denver Post,* May 9, 2006; and idem, "U.S. Has Role in U.N. Rights Issues," ibid., February 19, 2006.
25. Interview with Nanda, August 2004.
26. Ved Prakash Nanda, "Hindu Diaspora in the United States," paper presented at a conference on Indian democracy at the University of Chicago, November 2005, and forthcoming in the conference volume, edited by Wendy Doniger and Martha Nussbaum. The quoted sentences were added to the existing draft in May 2006.
27. Ibid.
28. See Daniel Golden, "The Untouchables Weigh In," *Wall Street Journal,* January 25, 2006; Charles Burress, "Hinduism Lawsuit Loses in Court Again," *San Francisco Chronicle,* April 22, 2006, B-2; Lisa M. Krieger, "Changes They Sought Rejected by Board," *San Jose Mercury News,* March 9, 2006.
29. Nanda, "Hindu Diaspora."
30. Williams, *Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism,* 31.
31. Ibid., 28.
32. Mayank Patel, paper written for a religion course at Emory University, quoted by permission.
33. Raymond Brady Williams, "Terror Invades Paradise," in *Williams on South Asian Religions and Immigration: Collected Works* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 131–137.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid., from a personal interview he conducted.
36. Ibid.
37. Patel, paper written for a religion course at Emory University.
38. I am grateful to Mayank Patel for this information.
39. And indeed, the Center for Comparative Constitutionalism at the University of Chicago held a large conference in November 2005, with "India: Implementing Pluralism and Democracy" its announced topic. Many nonacademics came to hear Amartya Sen's keynote address, but the detailed discussions of issues such as the free press, the role of the U.S. community, and the role of education that formed the rest of the conference were attended by only a handful of nonscholars.

10. The Clash Within

Epigraph: Rabindranath Tagore, "To Teachers," in *A Tagore Reader,* ed. Amiya Chakravarty (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 216–217.

1. Walt Whitman, "By Blue Ontario's Shore," lines 60–61, 65, in *Leaves of Grass.*
2. Ibid., line 133.

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